

THE MUTANTS By Rog Phillips

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AMAZING STORIES

JULY 25¢

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Cult of the
WITCH QUEEN

By RICHARD S. SHAVER
and BOB McKENNA

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Cult of the WITCH QUEEN

By RICHARD S. SHAVER
and BOB McKENNA

VOLUME 20
NUMBER 4

JULY
1946



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Front cover painting by Walter Parke illustrating a scene from "Cult of the Witch Queen"
Back cover painting by James B. Settles depicting "Wonders of the Ancient World"

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Volume 20
Number 4

The

OBSERVATORY

by the Editor

YOU will notice the absence of a couple of our regular features this month—and your editor has an alibi. He felt that rather than present them in a haphazard way, without the attention they deserve, he would hold them over to the next issue—and the reason he couldn't give them full attention was because he still hasn't become able to be a father without getting all upset and pacing corridors. Yes, it's our second girl! And now to tell you all about her . . . oh, all right, if that's the way you feel—

WITH the sensational reception given to Richard S. Shaver's "The Masked World," and the perfect flood of letters that poured in on us, including many hundreds who could affirm great portions of that astounding revelation of the cave mystery, we have a hunch that this issue's story "Cult of the Witch Queen" will certainly keep up the terrific pace that has been set. Incidentally, this one's not entirely by Mr. Shaver, but Bob McKenna (you thousands of Eastern readers ought to know him if you listen to radio station KDKA at all!) had a big hand in it. He furnished a lot of the rewrite and many notes-from Fort, etc.

IF YOU don't think space ships visit the earth regularly, as in this story, then the files of Charles Fort, and your editor's own files are something you should see. Your editor has hundreds of reports (especially from returned soldiers) of objects that were clearly seen and tracked which could have been nothing but space ships. And if you think responsible parties in world governments are ignorant of the fact of space ships visiting earth, you just don't think the way we do.

REMEMBER Rog Phillips' first yarn, "Atom War" which you liked so well in the same issue with "The Masked World"? Thought it ended abruptly, did you? Well, here's the secret—that was the first of a trilogy, of which "The Mutants," in this issue, is the second. When all three stories are published, you will have a sensational theory on what the atom bomb may bring to mankind if it is used in war.

FOR the "old-time" fan, the name Henry S. Whitehead will mean a lot. One of his few un-

published short stories is in this issue. It's called "Scar Tissue."

AS WE publish "The Man With Two Minds" by Leroy Yerxa in this issue, it is with a great amount of sadness that we announce the loss of another of our best friends. Leroy has gone to join that other writer he admired so much, David Wright O'Brien in that land where every story is a best seller. Perhaps the best tribute we could pay to Leroy Yerxa is to give him the undisputed crown for prolific appearance in AMAZING STORIES. His writings numbered many millions of words, and a great number are still unpublished. He used many pen names, and strangely enough, some of his most popular stories, several of them of "classic" standard today, appeared under other names than his own. On one occasion he was the whole contents page of our sister magazine *Fantastic Adventure* and it proved one of our most popular and successful issues. When a writer can do that, so artfully styling each manuscript so that not one reader suspected the single hand that wrote them all, he's great! And he'll remain great in the minds of all of us who knew him and read his stories.

RAY BRADBURY, who has grown in literary stature by leaps and bounds, appears this month with "Chrysalis," a yarn about Mr. Smith—which is telling you exactly nothing about the story, because we don't want to spoil one single bit of the thrill you'll get out of reading this one. It's fine stuff. The kind of a story that will make you feel that you've been given first place in a very special line.

"HEART OF LIGHT" is by Gardner F. Fox, and we've had it in our files for years. Since we bought it, Fox has become quite "the boy" in the writing game, and so we're proud to present one of his first stories. It'll prove the "boy" was a "man" to begin with. He's a writer whose first word was "top-notch." The story has to do with ancient Egypt and tombs and mummies that come back to life—but there the resemblance to anything old ends. You'll be tickled with it.

(Concluded on page 60)



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Cult of the
WITCH QUEEN

By **RICHARD S. SHAVER**
and **BOB McKENNA**





He writhed, helpless, under the powerful beam of light

FOREWORD

THIS is a tale of two planets, Earth and Venus, and of a man who found himself the plaything of the ugliest and oldest woman on the two worlds. She looked like a witch, and a capable witch has spells. This witch had had six centuries to study the ancient magic: the incredibly antique mechanisms left by the race whom we remember in vague myths only as—the Gods.

No one could live that long? Well, quoting Alexis Carrel, who is pretty well accepted in the world called science: "In medieval times, the idea of blood transfusions from young people as a means toward immortality, was widely believed in. . . . was the subject of a transfusion from the veins of a young man . . . The idea has certain things to recommend it . . . under proper conditions it might work." *Man the Unknown*, Alexis Carrel.

And too, did you ever see an old tree rejuvenated by the grafting on of a young sapling? It is a common practice among tree-surgeons.

Well, there is a legend of a woman who lived an unknown number of centuries. The first she is heard from is in fourteenth century Spain, and the legend can be found in the works of Sienkiewicz—who was a reliable man. She was called "The Watcher," also "Hecate, the Undying", also "The Mother of Sin". That there was a cult who followed a woman who was supposed to be undying is well nigh indisputable. But it seldom mentioned after 1500.

One day I met a man who told me this story. Knowing as I do that the antique caverns and the ancient mech of the God race does exist; knowing as I do the works of Carrel and certain others whose indisputable evidence is entirely in support of the possibility of

immortality; and knowing that trees are rejuvenated by the grafting on of young trees, I could not help but see the possibility of the truth of his story.

That children can be grafted on to aging people, and the young sap, the vital growth secretions of their bodies, used to make the modern vampire live on and on, I could not dispute, for I can not argue with such men as Carrel who have actually raised virtually immortal flesh in their test tubes and perfusion apparatus.

That there are usable space ships in the lost caverns of the secret ray groups of Earth, I could not argue, since I had seen the caves and the perfect preservation of the mechanisms built by the forgotten race, the Gods. That you have never experienced those things which happen to people—those mysterious and wonderful things which tell them that everything important on earth is not in the newspapers—can believe any of this tale, I do not expect.

For those readers who do not know that a large percent of this apparently fictional account is true, I warn not to read the footnotes; not to speculate on the possibility of age-old and secret vampirism and of mightier secrets too vast and too destructive for any man to find a way to tell his fellow-man.

But to "those who know" I want to answer one question that has puzzled so many of you . . . the question "ARE THEY IMMORTAL?" In this story it is particularly well answered. The other question which I know is in the mind of many of you: "ARE THEY EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL?" is also well and fully answered. To those students of the past who have puzzled about all the smoke around the subject "magic" or "witchcraft" this story is also particularly helpful.—*Richard S. Shaver.*

CHAPTER I

Our imagination cannot encompass all reality, for in the infinitude of universes, all things happen.

Eli Cramoissie, "Infinitesme's Philosophie"

Published 1784, Paris.

JUST outside one of the sprawling dull black and grey mills that feed the maw of Mars, on one of the dirty alleys that flank it, was a beer garden; no different than one of the scores that are spawned by droves of hot, thirsty workers.

At a battered bar of this joint was a tall, newly scrubbed young man about thirty. As he gazed thoughtfully into a half consumed glass of "suds," a denim-clad figure detached itself from the group about. In the camaraderie that such places breed he said:

"How'd it go today, Mac?"

"Oh, so-so. A little hot, but it was time-and-a-half today. How'd you do?"

"Okay. Say, I know you now—thought there was something familiar about that voice—you're the welder on #6 Skid, aren't you?"

"Yeah, but I can't seem to place you . . ."

"Electrician—I move around a lot." Casually throwing a crumpled bill on the counter, he said to the perspiring barkeep, "Bring us another round."

Frowning slightly the welder tried to decline the largess, "—had enough, oughta be 'getting'."

"Aw, don't tell me that. Where are you going to go this time of night. Look, how about us grabbing that booth and I'll buy all the drinks. Tonight's my birthday. Celebrate!"

"Well, Okay—but the next round's on me."

Carefully carrying their half empty glasses, they settled themselves on opposite sides of a sticky, ring-marked

booth table. Cigarettes were brought out by the welder. "Smoke?" he invited.

"No, thanks . . . used to smoke 'em, but five years away from 'em and you sorta lose all taste for tobacco."

"What's the matter? Swear off and stay off—for five years?"

With a wry grin, the other chuckled dryly, "Would be better to say I WAS sworn off." The welder asked what he meant as he lit his own cigarette and drew the first pleasurable puff.

"Well it's a long story . . . but you look like the type that might listen so I'll tell you." With that he finished his drink and instructed the waiter to keep some spares on deck. Then, toying with the ash-tray, he began:

"YOU'D guess my age as forty or forty-five, wouldn't you?"

The young welder, shrugged his shoulder and lamely wondered, "Well, aren't you?"

"No, I suppose I'm the same age you are—thirty." When the welder raised his eyebrows, in disbelief, he continued, "I know I don't look it, but I've knocked around a lot, been a sailor, and a whole crew of things . . . things that have left their mark. In my eyes mostly. Look at them—they've seen things no man was meant to see and stay sane."

Mentally frowning on his luck that seemed to throw him with crackpots, the welder moved impatiently as though to slide out of the booth.

"No, no, fellow—don't get up. Listen. I'm not nuts . . . and I'm not drunk . . . but I'll go nuts, if I don't get somebody to listen to me while I get something off my chest. I've GOT to tell somebody. Take it easy, and listen, will ya?"

As though thinking 'this bird might have a good yarn at that', the welder

pushed his back against the side-wall and propped one foot against the armrest on the other end of the seat, and settled down.

"That's it. Relax and listen. Hey, WAITER, bring us another round. Yeah, same thing." Seeming to address the departing waiter's back, he soliloquized, "A guy can't talk to most people about things that are really big—just like you can't put two quarts in a one-quart pail. Well, I've got something big . . . a lot bigger than quarts and pints, but when I really get into it you're going to think maybe you did make a mistake, maybe this guy is a jerk—or screwy. No, wait, don't say anything, just listen. Before I'm done you'll get cold feet. You'll be afraid to even listen to things different than those people usually talk about. You're going to be worried that maybe one of the bunch over there might hear me and take you for a sap for just listening to me—much less taking me seriously. If you got the guts to face something you don't know—even a little—hang onto the handle bars, I'm going to cut loose.

"DID you ever hear of Charles Fort?

I guess not. Most people haven't. Anyway, this guy Fort spent twenty years going through old magazines and newspapers. Searching for odd things that happen, are reported, wondered at, and then forgotten. Odd, queer things like chunks of machinery falling out of the sky. Strange shadows passing the face of the moon. Things that "look like ships" crossing the moon IN FORMATION. Twenty years he spent—he's been dead now for seven or eight years—and, except for the Fortean Society, most of those that did hear of him have forgotten already. But he wasn't wrong . . . there IS an understandable CAUSE for most of the

things we call mysterious. They read Fort and forget . . . you'll listen to me and you'll do the same thing, too. Marvel a little—and tomorrow, well, you'll know that there isn't anything that can make sense like your welding torch.

Anyway, I have to tell someone even if he won't believe . . ." Then, downing his drink in one gulp, Big Jim continued, "Unless you've read his books, you wouldn't believe there was so much stuff—things that have happened and then were "explained". Hah! that's a laugh! Explanations! The only trouble is those that do the explaining wouldn't recognize truth if it was pointed out right under their noses. Fort had a great big laugh at the weakness of us humans—all through history things out of the ordinary have happened. First it was the medicine men. Anything unusual was the angry gods. Then the high priests. And now we have a new hierarchy of explainers . . . the scientists. The explanations all had a same "oneness" . . . the gods were angry, the sacrifice wasn't large enough, or . . . 'as proven by mathematical calculation'. Talk. Chatter of little monkeys. Talk. But not the talk I'm going to do. Five years ago I couldn't talk to people—couldn't say more'n a few words to anyone without running out of what to say. Now I've GOT to talk to someone about what I've learned. They won't listen to me, though . . . I'm not telling them what they want to hear. Don't reassure 'em that things ARE what they seem. That must be it. They can't understand—think I'm ribbing them. God! I wish I was."

Waving a brawny forearm at the smoke filled room, Big Jim laughed mirthlessly. "Look at 'em . . . racing around on a pointless little merry-go-

round. Twelve hours work, a few beers then home to a dull shack and into bed. Same thing, over and over. I got away . . . once. Escaped from this useless life for five years. Now, dammit, I'm back, and doomed to the same old grind 'unto death'. Doomed to futility.

* * *

'BOUT five years ago . . . '39, it was, I sat in this same hole-in-the wall. Was a little earlier in the year, —June, I think. Hot, fetid night . . . hotter than tonight. You know, the kind of a summer night young fellows prowl the streets, wishing for a woman. Every night isn't the same. You know how it is, one of those nights when every woman you see is the most beautiful thing God ever made . . . some of 'em a lot more than that. Well, I started walking home. Lived up on Cherry street then—about sixteenth. There I was walking along, just like the rest of the single fellows that night, when all of a sudden, I got the damndest feeling. It's hard to describe—but I could see and hear someone . . . Someone watching me from about a mile away. "This damn heat's giving me mirage's or something," I says to myself. Crazy, I thought.

I can't tell you exactly what this was like—there seemed to be a big woman watching me with a strange kind of apparatus. That's not it exactly. Because, though she was watching me—I was aware of her and her actions . . . Can you imagine yourself in a dream, aware of someone standing beside you, and you're watching the action at the same time you're one of the characters? That's what it was like . . . except I was wide awake. Anyway, if I was dreaming, I didn't want to wake up cause she was interesting—big, and a guy as big as me is always keen on big women, most of 'em seem like

midgets.

I KNEW what she was thinking. That's what made me think I was dreaming. Awareness, I guess you'd call it. Someway, I knew she was making a decision from things she could read in my inner self. That's important. I KNEW she was reading my mind . . . as I was hers. But it appeared as though she were watching ME through a mirror or lens, or . . . or what?

She was saying to herself, "Yes . . . he'll do. I'll jerk this big handsome lug out of his dull rut. He'll find a life that's at least exciting, if not . . ." and she chuckled in a sinister way to herself, ". . . if not wholly desirable."

She turned to a girl beside her I hadn't noticed before. If I was dreamin', I was sure picking 'em tonight. This second girl—woman, would be righter, I think—this second one was big and beautiful too, though she did seem younger.

At the first one's signal, she moved closer to this mirror or screen that we seemed to be on either side of.

Remember I'm walking down a street all this time. But when the younger one moved closer to the screen, I seemed to be right there. I could look right at her.

Brother, kicking around all over the world, you meet and see a lot of women, but believe me, I've never seen any like her. Something she had—beauty, or personality, dunno which—came right out and smacked you hard. You know, your mouth seems dry, your stomach flutters and you think you'll never draw another breath, the way your throat's tightened. That's the way she was.

I remember her nostrils most. Nicely flared . . . but red, inside. Not pink, red.

I was sure I was dreaming—she was gorgeous, but her hair seemed almost

too fine, like spider silk. And her hands seemed webbed, almost.

She smiled a queer little smile, just showing her teeth—bigger and whiter than most people's.

And her eyes! Man! Bigger than any I've ever seen. Soft and luminous and knowing. A little sad. Strange too—with a strange sadness I can't explain.

She didn't have much on. A few spangles and sparklers . . . like a specialty dancer, or something. She didn't need anything else. The big woman said something to her in another language. The girl nodded and leaned toward the screen. I don't know how she did it, but she kissed me.

Like I'm dreaming, see, she kissed me and yet I couldn't touch her. That kiss was like a thousand thrills piled on top of each other. Gods! nothing—anywhere—has ever affected me like that kiss. Perfect ecstasy.

But I'll never get kissed like that again—I'll never see her, again. I wasn't dreaming . . . she WAS real. But she's lost to me now. Lost for the same reason you won't believe what I'm telling you. Poles apart . . . yet . . .

THAT funny sense of dreaming while awake—of seeing things a mile away, left me, suddenly. The way a light goes out. One instant I was being kissed, in ecstasy; the next, I was just walking along as I had been before I became aware of the big dame reading my mind.

The moon hung low at the end of the street, half hidden by that hill on the north side of River Street. Big. And a funny kind of golden red. That night it seemed too low—like a furtive celestial prowler. It made me conscious of bloody, evil, unknown things. Even the familiar, common

things suddenly seemed horrible . . . inexplicably . . . The horror almost of death . . . as though I were a walking dead man in a corpse world. I hated myself and the world with a dull, hopeless hate. Hate for the dull routine of the steel mill—the dirt—the choking smoky air—the booming clank of steel being born in the bowels of a grimy, impersonal, soul-destroying monster. Hopelessly, I tried to think of a way to get away from its depression. I didn't care to walk anymore, so I leaned against a 'phone pole. No reason for going home . . . even if I could sleep, that would only be a brief release. No reason for going anywhere.

Then SHE appeared again . . . but differently. No dream this—the McCoy. I think, "What kind of dreams am I having?—first I see her in or on a screen, now I'm thinking she's standing in front of me. I'm nuts."

You'd think, seeing someone, you know if it was a dream or real. But she seemed taller and dressed differently . . . like she'd just come from a masquerade, or something. She had on a long dark cape—in the poor light of the street it looked like it was red . . . like blood. Fastened close around her throat. Falling in straight folds almost to the ground. I noticed her shoulders were nice and square but appealingly female, despite her size. I couldn't see her hands—nothing but her head and this long dark cape.

I stared at her face, but out of the corner of my eyes I saw queer designs in gold chasing each other around the lower part of the cape. They didn't help my sense of unreality, I'll tell you, I half consciously wondered who the bell would work up designs like that? Then, driving all thoughts and wonder from my mind—like a door opening into a darkroom—she spoke.

Softly . . . with an amused little laugh, that was sad too, somehow . . . "Hello, big fellow."

I just looked . . . finally I managed weakly, "D—didn't—I see you—in a kind of a—a—a dream—a little while ago?"

Again that funny little laugh like the tinkle of a little glass bell . . . "Yes, you did—that's why I'm here." The funny accent didn't make me any more certain I wasn't dreaming yet, but I was willing to gamble when she invited.

"Come with me. You'll soon understand . . . everything."

I wanted to pinch myself. Instead, "If you'll open that cloak," I said, "then I'll know you're the same girl I saw in the dream."

SHE turned her head, quick, to see if anyone was looking at us. Then assured that the street was deserted, with one motion she opened her arms, spreading the red cloak behind her like a curtain of blood. I felt my strength go to water . . . like a white flame against the night she was . . . no more on than when I saw her before.

"I am called Ceulna," she said. "You are to follow me."

"Sister, if you're real, I'll follow you to hell."

"Come then," and she turned, allowing the cloak to fall concealing that glorious figure again.

She led me down a few blocks into a street where all the lamps were out. Dark as pitch. I thought what a guy usually thinks in such districts—why do they live here in places like this. Why don't they get out? You know how the houses are down there, all alike.

Well, she went in one of them with me right after her, my big feet stumbling, for she moved fast. Back apiece,

where there was more light, I could occasionally glimpse the outlines of her body, as the cape would momentarily cling to her in places. That figure was a swaying promise of delight—the answer to all my dreams, and I didn't mean to let her get away from me.

Somewhere inside the house, without turning on any lights she found a door. Opening it, she turned slightly, and, taking my left hand in hers, started down stairs . . .

I never went down so damn many stairs before or since. Down and down, pausing every once in a while, she'd open another door, then down again. Down, always down 'til I thought I'd never be able to walk if we did hit a level spot. Doors opening before us, closing after we'd pass through . . . then on down. Big doors, I noticed—after my eyes got accustomed to the faint light that seemed to be all around, without any source of light being seen. As though everything—walls, floor, ceiling and doors—were giving off a faint illumination of their own. Big doors of dull metal, that kept getting bigger the farther down we went. Groaning open before us, clanging shut—I wondered if she had walked up all these stairs in so short a time—IF she had.

"What are all these steps about, sister?"

"You'll find out!" And that's all she'd say—but she didn't stop going down stairs.

Well, I couldn't do anything but shrug and follow her. Then suddenly, my thoughts were interrupted—we'd run out of stairs!

There in front of us was a door, bigger than any of the others. The kind you don't expect to see 'til you meet St. Peter.

The girl, Ceulna, I should call her

now, turned and said, "Inside you will learn about life—and its absolute worthlessness. For your own sake, I hope you learn quickly. For down here you can die awfully sudden . . . or awfully slow."

Then a final reassuring squeeze of my hand and she busied herself with some strange lever. That big door ponderously opened, and we went through.

You couldn't tell exactly how big the place was . . . it was all black hangings instead of walls. But I got the impression that they did cover walls. All over the still black folds were gold figures like those on the girl's cloak. Peering closer, I was mildly surprised to see that the figures were artistic crabs, and from some place in my memory I recalled reading that the crab was the ancient symbol of evil wisdom and power.

SOME distance from the great door were people. Those drapes made distances deceptive. We moved toward this group, which, judging from the way Ceulna moved, was our destination. Maybe I should have said . . . our destiny . . .

Walking to the throne, which I saw now was what the group was clustered about, I glanced at the floor. A green floor, that seemed to be half alive. Then I realized it was the color and the curving, veinlike lines of dark red carefully worked into the material of the floor, that made it look so like the flesh of the lower reptiles.

After what felt like an endless walk, we stood in front of this throne-like chair. Then I knew I hadn't been dreaming, for seated in the chair was the woman who first contacted my mind back on the street. There was the screen and a whole mass of apparatus.

I used to be a ham radio man and I

worked with electricity, but I couldn't tell what any of those tubes and screens were for. The only thing I sensed was that some way they were electrical. But I swear those glowing tubes, view screens, dials, lever switches and peculiar glowing globes were never built by men for men's hands . . . or women's either. Oddly, I thought, "Hell, this looks like some of the equipment beings of other planets make . . . in science fiction stories!—or like some of the stuff that I've had nightmares about after too much whoopee.

But the dame on the throne didn't look like a monster (at first). She was beautiful. Like I always imagined Cleopatra was. Beautiful—and dominant. A kind of voluptuous beauty that set the blood pounding through your temples. The kind of woman a life of indulgent luxury makes. She was big too, like Ceulna. Big all over. Not gross, just big.

There she was half reclining on this couch or throne. It might have seemed like a gag—except everyone around her was so darn quiet—like they were afraid to even breathe.

She had on a long gown that was out of this world—made of some shimmering material that clung to her in the right places, like it was part of her. One leg was crossed over the other, and the constantly changing shimmer of the cloth highlighted a long smoothly curved thigh that I'd have whistled at if it hadn't been so damn quiet.

I figured, "I didn't crash this joint so I'll give her the once over a couple of times." And I did.

STARTING at her head there was some fine metallic net that kept her hair in place, except where it hung straight to her shoulders where the soft waves started to cascade down her

back. Her shoulders, too were wide, but certainly not girlish . . . well rounded with an inviting texture. The only reason I could see for the dress was she wanted the color.

She looked at me with half closed ice-blue eyes.

The dress was like a thousand miniatures of her eyes—like some weird jewels had been woven into the cloth. Glittering and sparkling like liquid gems—or the eyes of vampires—a diamond under a full moon.

She stared at me awhile longer, so I looked the rest of them over. The men—slaves, I felt—wore only G-strings, but the females were all wrapped up to the eyes like Arab women. Evidently, the boss on the throne dislikes any other women displaying flesh where it might look better than her own.

Finally, her pouting mouth twisted into a grin and she spoke. Her voice was hardly human—almost musical, but lacking the tone flux of human emotion. A mocking meanness ran through her words,

"You are a fortunate man, Big Jim," while I wondered how she knew my name. There hadn't been a peep out of me. Then, I remembered the machine—if I could read her mind while she was using it, I suppose she could read mine too. But what was she saying?

"You have been chosen by a mighty organization as one more unit of strength . . ." On that last word her cold eyes ran over my body like a horse trader looking at a good buy.

I thought it best to keep my mouth shut 'till I found out what this was all about.

"You will remain here until you understand what is expected of you. I will decide what your duties will be. If you are thinking or refusing, re-

member that your wishes in the matter are not important. None who enter here return to reveal the entrance to those not of our organization."

My first impulse was to get up and slap her face for her insolence. I couldn't speak. I was getting damn mad. Just as I was ready to say something, she continued, "Now, while you are at hand, I can show you our punishment for disloyalty—in case you are ever tempted to betray us. Happily, I can also demonstrate the rewards you can receive for devoted accomplishment in obeying our orders. When you are shown, remember you can obtain more of the same pleasure anytime you are able to do us a service."

SHE gestured languidly to a female slave who quickly pulled back a heavy drape, revealing a greater mass of huge mechanism. A massive complicated thing that wasn't anything made by modern man. The rounded intricacies had the beauty of life forms. The surfaces had a hard glitter and iridescence more living than metallic. Looking at the strange shape, I felt its power and knowledge. Power more piercing than mortal men. Somehow, I felt puny and ignorant, looking at that thing. And I'm not puny and I'm not ignorant. But the mech—down there they call all the ancient machinery 'mech'—the mech wasn't really big, it just made you sense the higness of it.

Above this—mech—hung the crucified figure of a girl. Eighteen she might have been—her body a soft symphony in sculptured stone.

What were all the good looking women doing here, I wondered. Here down so many steps, under ——— City. I guess we might have been a mile or more under the earth.

I thought at first that this new girl

hanging above the mech was just a horrible parody of a statue—the way certain lights and shadows were playing over her body. Then, suddenly, I went cold. It was a living woman!—she moaned softly, and her limbs writhed—painfully—slowly. She was alive—a crucified living young girl!

Placed under the girl's feet was a long, ominous looking couch. I didn't like the gruesomely suggestive look of the thing—there were straps attached to it, hanging like the open arms of Death, waiting for something—or someone. Someone to hold down—while the gods only know what horrible things were done.

The Boss dame gave me just a few seconds to take in the scene—then she made an imperious gesture. I should have been on my toes—but I wasn't.

Two of the slaves came alive at her signal then, and before I realized what was coming off they had hold of my arms. That made me mad—fighting mad. With a curse, I jerked my left arm free. Before the two dumb slaves knew what I was doing I had swung around. Getting a good grip on the one on my right, I tossed him against my other little playmate and both went sprawling. They weren't too anxious about getting up again, either. Before any more could jump me I turned around, ready to sock the next bird that made a move. No one did.

There wasn't a sound—except my own gasping breath. Then, the formerly soft, pouting moist mouth of the big broad running the show hardened into a thin line and she spoke—her voice like the lash of a blacksnake whip in the stillness—no longer soft and voluptuous, but strident and threateningly angered.

"I see I shall have to teach you several lessons at once!"

I GLANCED right at her. She was standing up now—that smooth, just too soft figure of hers quivering with scarcely concealed anger.

Without any warning, she bent slightly, reaching for the banks of controls. She found the one she wanted and threw a switch or lever. A beam sprang out of the huge mech. Sprang out like a searchlight's beam—in my direction.

I figured that if I was to do anything it had to be now, so I started toward her. I didn't get far—I was out of my league. She moved the beam onto me saying, "Now, note, my muscular rebel, everything you do you do by my will. Mine, not your own. This is the first lesson—learn it well. Resistance is useless . . . your big muscles are my property so long as this beam is on you and I look into this screen."

I wanted to smash my fist into that lovely, angered, sneering face, but what she said was true! I had no volition of my own. I tried and couldn't even move a finger.

With my mind fighting for control of my own body, she made it move to the couch and lie down, the beam always on me.

Strapping me down, the slaves fastened several wires at different places on my skin.

This Hellion that was ruler here stepped down from the throne and glided over to me. Her voice husky with some emotion—some strange eagerness suddenly awakened within her, she whispered, like the hiss of a snake.

"Now you will experience one of the least of the rewards we grant those that do our bidding, loyally and well. She that hangs there," indicating the crucified girl, "has earned our punishment by betraying us to our enemies. Absorb both 'lessons' well—if you wish

to enjoy yourself here in the future."

With that she seated herself at what looked like the console of an organ, not three feet from my head.

Directly above me drooped the body of the girl. The woman's mechanical voice, still husky with that strange note explained, "This mech is called the organ of opposites. From it lead two sets of wires, one controlling a synthetic nerve impulse of pleasure energy, and the other, a synthetic nerve impulse of pain. With it I can give immense pleasure and intense and violent pain at the same time. The girl is wired to the pain source; you are connected to the pleasure vibrant. Beware that you are never at the other end of the wires . . . watch, and feel . . .

She let her fingers down caressingly on the keys—she depressed one, and through my body ran a wave of intense, insupportably sweet pleasure.

Momentarily decreasing my enjoyment was the sight of the girl hanging above me—simultaneously contorted with violent pain. Then I became aware of the girl's thoughts and sensations . . . the ancient mech that was controlling both the girl and myself could, almost magically, make both of us aware of the other's thoughts and sensations—a ware, as though our minds and emotions had been transplanted. I KNEW her thoughts, and somehow, I knew she was aware of my own.

THE first surge of opposing emotion was only the opening note of what proved to be a symphony of unguessed pain and exquisite pleasure. Whatever else the cruel voluptuary at the console might be, she was a virtuoso of an art unknown on Earth to ordinary men . . . by the skilled use of some sensation music, playing bodily

sensation with the feeling and dexterity of a masterful surface musician.

Enrapt by the cacaphony of opposite sensations she was sending through her subjects, her fingers increased their speed—greater, and more intense, the sensations coursing through our bodies, crescendoed as her fingers depressed key after key . . . exquisite chords of pleasure, at this witch's mad artistry, were multiplied a thousand times. A vast storm of ultra-powerful synthetic emotions and pleasure sensations grew within my brain—within every nerve and tissue of my body . . . the pleasurable sensations of a lifetime packed into each wave every time she pressed a key . . .

God forgive me! the thoughts I had while that damnable machine was playing will haunt me through hell and a thousand lifetimes! . . . while I was groaning with the floods of delight, I DELIGHTED in the girl writhing painfully above me more than anything on Earth . . . At one foul step the operation of the ancient mech made me cruel . . . and EVIL . . . all my flesh and being *desired agony and pain* for her that I might soar the heights of pleasure that was the inevitable accompaniment of her torture.

No man could do otherwise—for the setup of those synthetic nerve impulses was an automatism of *evil*—pleasure in another's pain was the essence of the mech.¹

In a brief moment when the wave of sensations had subsided before crescendoing again, I looked at the big witch

¹These synthetic electric sensation impulses forcibly replace one's natural will with its artificial will. The victim's will and self obeyed the great evil machine, for its strength of nerve- and thought-electric was so much superior to the natural will of man. The good, beneficial uses of the ancient machine had been perverted by the profane hands of others than the original builders.—Author.

who was controlling my delight drenched body . . . like an artist pouring his soul into his playing, the woman's face was rapt—I realized that neither the poor tortured girl on the cross, nor my own ecstatic body, meant more to her than a page of music does to a pianist. Vaguely, I wondered . . .

"WHO . . . or what . . . WAS she . . . where'd she come from?"

Then, cutting short any further thoughts, the stops of synthetic emotion were pulled by the witch-artist, and, once more, my senses and self went reeling and soaring in their first lesson in evil desire . . . in devilish pleasure in another's intense agony.

Whatever she was I didn't care then. I was her slave . . . for such tremendous joy and bliss had never before been mine.

This type of treatment, springing from the ancient cult's customary practices in increasing its evil strength was what had made the woman what she was . . . but this I learned later.

I was favored 'cause my arrival coincided with her punishment of the girl, and the witch couldn't resist the chance to practice her art on an attractive male and spend her venom on a beautiful woman together.

An hour of this weird and horrible music of opposite sensations passed. Pain for the girl whose lovely body by then was dripping bloody sweat over me in a steady stream; pleasure for me, straining at my bonds, consumed with ecstasy. Pain and Pleasure. The girl's mouth was pulled open in a continuous scream—a sound to haunt the deepest hell.

At last, a final crescendo of rending chords made the two bodies strain violently toward each other . . . mine in a convulsive surge of delight . . . the poor agonized girl's, in tearing deathly

pain . . . a torrent of blood gurgled from her open, agony-frozen mouth—death was setting her free from her Hell . . . With her last few gasping breaths her eyes glared at me . . . her face . . . God! . . . her agonized face will never leave my mind—nor over let me sleep in peace.

THE male slaves came and released me. I couldn't think—but an evil desire had been born in my brain . . . a desire to have such pleasure always. Too, I had a strong sense of guilt . . . I HAD enjoyed the death agonies of the girl.

The woman who had just tortured a girl to death and awakened a devil in my own soul sat with her eyes gloating at the racked body of her victim. I knew, instinctively, that many, many people had died at her hands in just that way. She turned to me.

"Now you have seen our punishment . . . and tasted a bit of our reward—" She was looking at me approvingly as she continued, "—if you do well what is asked of you, you can earn a life of such pleasures as few mortals have ever known . . . If you get idealistic or squeamish—and or try to buck the ruler group—you will die as she died—or in an even more horrible and painful way. I, Nonur, have spoken. Go."

With that and a tired wave of her hand a slave came and led me away. I couldn't have answered her even if my condition had permitted me. As I left, my ravished humanity began to reassert itself, and I swore an oath never to rest unless I had to, until I had stopped such torture forever, by killing all such as she . . .

I knew it wasn't, yet I kept telling myself that this was just a wild nightmare—I'd wake up, sweating and worried and then forget about it.

But I didn't wake up—I WAS

awake! Such things just couldn't go on under a modern American city—but they could—and DO!

That night I met others who had thought such things couldn't be—but are. Others, like myself, recruits for the secret army the hidden people were gathering. For that was the purpose of numerous other young men I saw. All as strange to this place and its ways as I was.

CHAPTER II

"I have killed many things, but none was a greater crime than this, that they should die before the flesh had quite grown used to being round a soul. A white and shrunken nothingness. . . .

From "Memoirs of a Warrior"

Bikaren of Tuon

Venus, 1609.

THE rock down here under ——— City was a labyrinth of rooms and passages. Big rooms that seemed to have been lavishly furnished, sometime in the past, but the splendor was covered with inches of dust now. If I had only known how ancient that dust was, down there in the almost dustless caverns, I'd have looked more searchingly beneath its blanketing greyness.

Some of the rooms had been cleaned out and furnished with beds and plumbing. These rooms contained but few of the hulking mysterious mechanisms characteristic of the ancient place.

They contained other men too—the room I was taken to had an occupant already. His face was thin and haggard—broken teeth were hideous when he spoke. About forty, I guessed. As soon as the slave escorting me left, the old one began to question me. Impatiently, as if he'd have burst if the slave hadn't gone and permitted him to satisfy his curiosity.

"What do you know of this place, young fellow?"

"Very little," I answered, "but before we go too far hadn't we better get acquainted? My name's Jim McKenna, steel-worker from the city upstairs."

"Glad to know you, my boy. My name's Farne—Henry Farne. 'Hank' to my friends." He stood, taken aback, when I reached out to shake hands. Then hesitatingly, he put his out.

"You're new here, aren't you?"

I just grunted an affirmative "Uh-huh."

"I'm an old hand in this hellish life—and ole Hank knows a greenhorn when he sees one—"

Better be careful, I thought, so I said, "How?"

"Well, the look on your face, fer instance—all the oldtimers have a dopey, fatalistic expression. It's the 'stim' juice—that's stimulative electric, case you didn't know; anyway, the stim juice kills their souls."

The old boy was evidently glad to have an audience, for he continued like a lecturer or something—

"Think I know why too—that mech is too old—way too old—to use like they do, constantly. Not as healthy as it was when it was built long ago—God only knows HOW long ago." Here he smiled, displaying those dirty, discolored, broken teeth. "You'll find out—'s funny to get used to the idea that a secret underworld life like this exists on Earth without anyone upstairs getting wise. Been like that for centuries—little change . . . but to get worse, I guess."

He'd been looking no place in particular, when he suddenly looked straight at my eyes and said, "Your face, Jim—that's the name, isn't it?—your face, Jim, is still human—or I'd be afraid to talk to you . . . afraid you'd run to the big shots and get me in

wrong. You are newly arrived, aren't you?"

I NODDED, my curiosity aroused. This Henry Farne seemed to know something of this darkly strange, horrible organization whose ruthless torture and cruel pleasures I had felt tonight. As a frog's tongue does to a fly, these cave dwellers had reached out and snared me—the beautiful creature who had led me here was just bait for the trap whose rulers were shanghaiing an army. I wanted to know what I was in for.

"Look, man, give me the dope, will you—what's this all about anyway?—I just came down tonight."

Evidently this satisfied the old man for he squatted on his heels against the wall in front of my bed. Settling himself, his eyes scanned me carefully, then—

"I'll take a chance and tell you what I can—but don't let THEM know I told you anything. I've been punished before for my opinions . . . the rulers don't like truth spread around too much."

He paused long enough to take a long, thin, purple cigar from his pocket.

"Know what this is?" he asked, holding up the cigar. I looked at it a minute then answered, "Well, it looks like a purple cigar, why?"

Hank put the long cigar in his mouth and lit it.

"It's a cigar alright—but it's not tobacco—it's a drug grown on the planet Venus . . . a whole lot different than tobacco—here, taste it."

I took the weed and took a drag on it. The smoke was sweet, heady, and very pleasant. At the first puff my mind felt a new exhilaration—it was racing. I was suddenly more awake than I had been all evening. Somewhat reluctantly I handed the cigar back. "That's certain-

ly not tobacco—no tobacco ever gave me such a lift. Wonderful stuff," I commented.

Satisfied, Farne took the cigar again, saying, "That was just a test to see if you were familiar with the weed. Had you been an old timer, like me and the rest, your face wouldn't have shown surprise when you first tasted that potent drug."

"This old bird isn't as dumb as he looks," I thought to myself, as he leaned back and began an account that lasted half the night.

"You've got to be careful down here—never forget that. Careful . . . careful of even what you think . . . That cat from Hell out there can read minds with her damn mech."

Like the caliph of ancient Bagdad listening to Scherezade, I listened without a word as Hank spun his yarn.

NONUR . . . that's the witch's name . . . Nonur, and others like her rule these caverns—these ancient caves that go back beyond the memory of man. The caves—these caves here—are the long hidden home of some ancient, wiser-than-human race."

"Did you see the mech of opposing sensations?" he suddenly asked.

"See it? Hell, man, that crazy dame put me through it!"

"Well . . . that's not so good, but the point I was making was that machine and thousands of others—all the mech you'll see down here, except the plumbing—was built unguessed thousands of years ago by beings who knew infinitely more than modern men. Nonur, and the others before her, have had this ancient mech since earliest time . . . I suspect since before the biblical flood."

I was having a hard time getting that, when he continued to pour out one

startling fact after another . . . I couldn't believe then . . . but IT IS TRUE!

"The use of this antique mech has made them into dero—most of 'em, anyway." At my puzzled glance, Hank explained that "dero" meant degenerate robot—degenerated humans, lacking in will or souls. "Through the years," said Hank, "the continued use of these marvelous mechanisms, and other factors, idleness and cannibalism, for instance, has caused them to evolve in an utterly different way of life. And in the centuries they have managed to keep the secret of the caves hidden from surface men—whom they despise and hate . . . so they say."

By this time the Venusian cigar was consumed. Hank tamped it out and then continued. "Even their bodies, minds and thought processes have been changed from anything you are used to regarding as natural to men like us. Let me warn you, right here, young fellow, never forget that as long as you're in the caves . . . they're not human, so don't try to outguess 'em by figuring they'll act like you would."

"I suppose," continued Hank, "this ancient mech was built originally for pleasure and stimulation—but these devils have managed to make torture machines out of pleasure rays and body-electric-stimulants. It's their source of power—brings some of 'em riches, tremendous riches—to boot."

"NOW, Boy, these devils have plans for you so I'll give you the dope on things you might need to know. The ancient people who build these caves . . . also conquered space. Some of their old spacers they abandoned when they left Earth forever. This bunch down here have found some of 'em and got 'em running . . . that wasn't too hard . . . the ships are practically in-

destructible. When they got 'em operating they traveled the far spaces, in the past centuries. Still do, even today . . . make regular trips between Earth and Venus. They go to Mars too, I hear, but I've never learned much about it—except there isn't much life on Mars, but I HAVE been to Venus."

I had seen too much already to offer much doubt about this—these ancients were far, far ahead of the boys on the surface, so I urged Hank to tell me what Venus was like.

"Venus is a whole planet of jungle paradise . . . peopled by a beautiful and advanced race superior to Earthmen in many ways. The women of Venus are far more beautiful than those of Earth, on the average, but, then, so are the men,—though they're not as large as the women. Now, the ones we work for aren't good for the Venusians, nor good to them. Unlike Earth, however, the Venusians are well aware of the evil presence in their midst—and we of Earth are that Evil. The Venusians have the antique mech too, but it's not a secret with them; they know more about it than the secret rulers of Earth . . . and that makes them powerful enemies. They're getting wised up now, but they used to be gullible as Hell, which made them putty in the hands of a skillful liar. You are here because the Venusians, millions of miles away, are wising up."

For the life of me I couldn't see how anything that far away could affect me so I asked him to explain.

"The native races of Venus," he went on, "have recently risen against the invaders from Earth—done pretty well, too. Our chief allies there are the 'cultists', the Hagmen—priests of Hecate—led by their so-called goddess, The Hag, herself. Hecate—The Hag's—age is unknown—supposed to be immortal. She's a giantess—bigger'n yourself.

Big! And a master of much of the ancient wisdom. She went to Venus centuries ago—and in that time, has built up a well-knit, effective organization. That's why you're here . . . you are going to be trained to fight for these hidden powerful people of Earth against the free peoples of Venus."

The idea didn't appeal to me. Not that I didn't like to fight—but I do like to pick my own. This business of being forced into something made me mad, but I figured I'd better let Farne go on talking and learn what I could.

"YOU talk like a man whose been well educated," I prompted him, "yet, you look as if you had had a life of poverty and hard work—how come? What happened to you?"

He smiled, though there wasn't much humor in it. "Well, you see, these people—the ones from Earth—have a government of a sort perhaps comparable to the government of Rome during the corrupt reign of the later Caesars. I was sent to Venus years ago. I liked the natives, got along well with them—too damn well, in fact. When trouble came between the Venusians and the Earthmen, I was under suspicion. And, with these rulers of ours, my young friend, suspicion means they either kill you or throw you in a cell 'til the danger is all past. That's where I've spent my time . . . in a dank cell deep under the mighty fortress-city of Luon."

As though he was wryly pleased with himself, Hank continued, "Hah! Then when our little Venusian Friends really began to fight, and a long war was seen to be inevitable—our beloved 'masters', and here he spat, "decided my great knowledge of Venus might be needed. So . . . with many apologies, they took me out of prison, gave me a square meal for a change, new civilian clothes and put me aboard the first

ship for Earth. I got here yesterday . . . and they haven't paid any attention to me since I landed."

That seemed to end his tale, so I figured I would ask a few questions myself. "Just what," I asked him, "are these Venusians really fighting about?"

Farne looked at me quizzically. "It's hard to tell you . . . but their children have been disappearing regularly—and they blame Hecate's priests and the Earthmen. More than that—well, I don't know absolutely—but from the usual practices of the Cult of Hecate—the Hag she's called—I can imagine that the Venusians have plenty of provocation."

"What is this 'Cult of Hecate,'" I asked, "this 'Cult of the Hag' as you call it?"

"Well . . . it's a sort of an old thing on Venus—you might call 'em 'Early Settlers'. Went there from Earth, around 1400, I think. They're a cruel bunch—my front teeth were smashed when one of them kicked me in the face . . . though they're not unlike our own secret ray people here on Earth in their cruelty. I want to warn you—"

"Warn me!" I interrupted, "against what?"

"Yes, warn you, young fellow—don't decide you don't care to join their little army . . . since you know all about them now, you'll not be allowed to return to the surface world. And if you balk at the enforced soldiering . . . you'll be treated as a deserter and put at some kind of hard labor . . . or worse. Pretend to be highly entranced and wholly charmed with everything down here . . . no matter what your true feelings, approve of their cruelty when you see it . . . or you won't see long."

HANK talked for a long time before we turned in—of the immense

steaming jungles of Venus, of that tropic planet's girl-warriors in their gleaming ray-proof armor, racing on the crystal spider-walks they spin like great glittering cobwebs through the tremendous tree growths. He talked of the ancient love-cults whose rites and ceremonies he described at length; their struggle with the horror cult of the cruel Hecate, the Mother of Sin—the Cult of the Limping Hag. He told me of the great glass houses, of their cities that hung like strange and gigantic fruit from the huge tree limbs of the forest giants.

Hank caught my imagination as no one ever has; I longed to see this strange world where the trees grew large enough to form the foundations of cities; where the great sluggish rivers dotted with the shining crystal craft of the laughing youth of Venus, rolled their awful might to the deep red seas.

The desire to see the wonders of Venus for myself made me more reconciled to the rugged training I soon had to undergo—even more I was anxious to go on, now, after hearing Hank.

SWIFT days of training passed. I was outfitted with a uniform and weapons. Taught to handle certain of the antique war mech of the caves. These seemed to be in great profusion, collected from the labyrinths of dwelling caves—perhaps from other planets, too. They were thousands of years old . . . but they had been built by that ancient Master Race . . . built by the God-race, to last forever—built of time-resisting materials, and the caves themselves were so air-tight and damp-proof that the ancient mech was, for the most part, still in good condition. All the antique weapons were self-contained units—some were mounted on wheels, having a seat like a tractor. The mech

had a tank into which they poured water and inside the tough shielding metal a little dynamo of tremendous power sprang into whirling life at the touch of a button. Its power must have been drawn from the disintegration of the water by some method long lost to men.

On the tractor-like model there was a lever in the center that controlled the ray-beam of destruction—in the same way a joy-stick controls the movements of a plane in flight; right and left swing for right and left sweep of the beam and forward and back to move the beam up and down.

I learned to read the dials in the view screen—dials that indicated rough, fine, and vernier focus of distant objects.

They didn't teach us how to make any but the simplest of repairs wouldn't let us open any of the cases. But then, I don't suppose there is a man living, anywhere, who could have really fixed one of the ancient mech-weapons that had actually broken down.

That view-screen was a marvel. I wondered if the rays' amazing power and range was due to fine lenses or to a system of magnetic fields, like an electron microscope, or something. That thing could bring a man thirty miles away into such sharp focus that his face seemed just two feet from the screen. Most of our training consisted of practice with this instrument—bringing distant objects into swift focus, center 'em on the cross hairs—then press the firing studs. Wham! and whatever was in focus just wasn't anymore. A terrible, deadly weapon—but only a tiny unit, comparing with their large weapons as a rifle does to a Big Bertha.

From what I saw of their weapons and maneuvers in the vast caverns, this small force of a couple of thousand men could have beaten any of the Earth's

surface armies before the army knew what had happened.

These rulers of the caverns were the potential, if not the actual, Rules of Earth . . . yet, VENUS COULD FIGHT THEM!

What terrible forces would we shanghaied soldiers have to face? What would the Venusians throw at us that could stop an army armed with these marvelous weapons of the Gods Themselves! And surface men didn't even suspect they exist. They still don't!

CHAPTER III

"Evoe! O Bacchus!" thus began the song; And "Evoe!" answered all the female throng.

Unbind your fillets, loose your flowing hair, And orgies and nocturnal rites prepare.

Virgil

HANK knew what he was talking about . . . they trained us . . . and kept us in luxurious kennels. I had been there about two weeks when they called us to a feast. To celebrate our departure, we learned eventually, but departure to a far planet—not to home. A sort of a morale builder before they sent us off to the wars . . . their wars.

As we entered the vast cavern hall, which dwarfed the immense tables set with a thousand places, I was stunned. It wasn't the sheen of the golden vessels, or the sparkling of the jewel-set lamps, nor the rich fabric and design of the hangings, nor even the glittering bosoms of the Rulers. It wasn't even the thousand dancing girls' glistening bodies present to amuse us . . . it was the several hundred gossamer-draped girls—floating in the air! like living bubbles in a god's draught of champagne . . . through some weird magic of the ancient mech they floated in a

hypnotic state—each bouyed up by a levitation beam from the mech and synchronized so that they moved slowly about without ever crossing or colliding.

Due to their hypnotic condition, their faces were the faces of dryads long hungry for love and suddenly released from their tree-coffins. The gleaming, flashing girdles about their hips, enhanced the seductive, never ceasing motion . . . their floating hair glittered with what may have been gold dust—but looked to me like diamonds or stars.

This magic of floating women set the keynote of the feast—lavish beauty above the somehow sinister faces of the luxurious, decadent group who were the descendants of those who for long centuries had kept the secret of the ancient magic.

A Bacchanalian revel to show those who were about to plunge into battle for them that they weren't niggardly . . . but the Rulers could easily afford the cost—I learned later it wouldn't have to be repeated for many of their new soldiers . . . most of these young men were soon to die, fighting on the spider-walks of the Venusian cities of crystal. Soon to die—but they had no inkling of it, who would have, in that utterly abandoned orgy? Nor had I, except for a brief wonder at the weapons that the Venusians must have if they could face the mech we used . . . even here in the banquet hall.

When the blood is racing and your eyes can't focus clearly for the delightful way your mind seems half attached to your body, logic is soon forgotten . . . and the Rulers that night had the means to do it. That feast surpassed anything I had ever seen—or even read of in ancient Roman splendor . . . strange drugged drinks were served to excite us, the strange, wild haunting melodies of Venusian music never

ceased. The stimulating pleasure rays I'd already experienced, and still craved, played always about the ball—an invisible lightning, intensifying the interest of a man and a maid—drifting on to other couples when their attention turned to other affairs.

There were jugglers, and conjurers, and dancing girls from Venus. It was in this group that I met again the girl Ceulna . . . the same one who had lured me here, the first night. She had just concluded a dance whose furious tempo and strangely exotic gyrations would have exhausted an Earth girl far more than it had this tall glorious, marble-limbed Venusian. A Venusian—that's what she was—a Venusian, here under a modern American city. She . . . and thousands like her.

VENUSIANS are subtly different that Earth people—their nostrils flare widely and are scarlet inside. Their eyes, a light grey or a flashing green that varies according to their spirit and interest—much larger eyes than one sees any need for. And webbed hands! Yes—webbed—webbed almost to the tips of their long, graceful fingers. Brilliant, large white teeth—oddly, the canines are larger than those of Earthmen, but still pretty.

Well set on their heads are their very thin, shell-like ears. Rather large though, but one doesn't notice this in the women, as they are hidden in the floating silk of their hair. Venusian hair is curious, being of infinitely fine stuff—like spider silk—too fine for quick combing, often quite matted, but always beautiful. Beauty? Ceulna was . . . how do they say it? . . . the ultimate of beauty.

I was suddenly more than glad to see her again. I felt more acquainted with her than any of these others reveling about us, so I invited her to join me.

Like women everywhere, though, that was her idea—what had brought her to my table anyway.

Evidently that was the case for we soon were talking like life-long friends seeing each other after a brief absence. She spoke a little English in that funny little accent that made my heart do flip-flops—and I asked her many questions, as much to listen to her as to really get an answer. Simple, common little questions like, "What do you young people of Venus do for amusement?"

Then, the thinking voice, "make love, like you of Earth . . . or we swim . . . and swim. We of Venus swim much, much more than you. Or, we like to make thoughts on the old machines . . . but of that you would not know."

Finally, lowering my voice, I asked, "How is it that you of Venus work for those who are at war with Venusians?"

"You do not know much of Venus," she stated with a sad shake of her head. "You see, in my home city the Hagmen rule—and that Limping Hag, their Queen—she is not a good ruler. So . . . I go to work for the Hag's allies, for they have more fun . . . more dancing and music. Hecate, the Hag, is not fun, ugh!"

I grinned back at her wide, good humored smile as she just wrinkled her nose. She probably didn't care for the Hag, I thought, but she didn't let it mean too much in her fun-loving life. She had a terrifically attractive personality—a kind of lazy vitality, a sureness of herself I envied. Well, I like fun too, and she was more than fun—just to be near her was exhilarating. I frowned at her as though I thought the Hag was distasteful too—then we both laughed gaily, like little children.

WE WEREN'T the only ones laughing—about us swirled increasingly

unrestrained revelry—being excited to ever greater unrestraint by the sweeping pleasure-ray's stimulation.

My curiosity as to the strange unsuspected strength of these hideous Rulers . . . that whispered fear of the Hag I'd heard so often—I felt I could get answered if I kept my interest masked in gaiety. So, I laughed as I prompted, "Tell me of the Limping Hag that you fear, Ceulna."

Shrugging her beautiful shoulders, she started, "The Hag is a very ancient . . . supposedly immortal . . . creature. They say she is centuries old . . . many centuries. She's a giantess—a hideous, old giantess. We don't know when she first came to Venus . . . she and her followers landed in the wild forests and were there many, many years before they were discovered."

Ceulna glanced at my eyes as though to assure herself I was listening, then continued, "She was much smaller, then—and her followers weaker in numbers, possibly only a few thousand in all. But the gullible and innocent women of the Tuons who ruled the surrounding country believed every lie the Hag and her men told, and let them live in peace . . . until it was too late. The Hagmen are accomplished liars—particularly in lying to a people to whom a lie is unthinkable—the Tuons believed too easily all they were told. Now . . . now, we know the Hag is an antique vampire who prolongs her horrible existence with the blood of young children . . . and takes no other food."

I guess I expressed disbelief, momentarily, or something, because Ceulna hastened to reassure me, "Oh, yes, the Hag even has many big farms . . . farms of children . . . but, somehow, her . . . child-cattle, don't do very well, and are old when a normal child would be just grown. She steals their youth . . . by living on a daily infu-

sion of their young blood!"

"What does she—the Hag—look like?" I asked her, my eyes on her vivid, startlingly alive face with those oversize Venusian eyes flashing strangely out of the ultra-whiteness of her Tuon skin.

Cocking her head coyly to one side, she asked me, "Would you like very much to see?"

I nodded with a smile and she arose. "Then follow me and I will show you some magic that children play with on Venus."

I trailed after her spangled dancer's form as she threaded through the boisterous, drunken mob, wondering where a person acquired such a gait—like a tight-rope artist's—her figure as balanced as a gyroscope, yet, as sinuous as a cat's. Had I seen the spiderwalks of her home city on Venus, I would have known how many generations of perilously racing feet had produced the delicate precision of her stride.

SOON we were in the part of the caverns where the dancers had their quarters. Ceulna's apartment was lavish and luxurious. At my appreciative glance, she laughed, "Boss, he like my dancing. He say, 'You like this place?' I say, 'Okay, Boss.' He say, 'Okay, Beautiful.'"

Opening a curiously embossed metal chest, she withdrew a green crystal globe that had a kind of coronet attached. Immediately, its resemblance to the Egyptian headdresses worn by priests and gods made me wonder if the pictures I had seen in history books were similar contrivances from the same source? However, my speculations were cut short by Ceulna's actions.

"Now watch the ball and you will see what the Limping Hag—the Mother of Sin, looks like," and she pressed a stud at the side of the heavy coronet base.

A light quivered into vague life within the green ball's depths . . . the crystalline, murky green slowly whirled and cleared to reveal a picture—as though one were looking down on a scene from a great height.

"I spied on her one day from a big tree—she didn't know I was there," Ceulna chattered, as the globe became clearer. "There! There she is . . . the big one."

The figure in the globe was big, standing twice the height of the figures about her. Her body was well covered with flesh, still, she seemed bony. Barbaric ornaments were bung and fastened all over that huge harridan. Her face was a fierce Medusa mask from antiquity, covered with a network of fine wrinkles. She seemed to scorn clothes and her immense dugs bung down to her waist—the living incarnation of that foully evil Hindu Goddess KALI! in the flesh.

The green whorls had left the globe entirely and I could see the background. The Hag was in a big garden—a garden that I found out later could only exist in the hot-house air of Venus. Among the immense, flowering shrubs, and over the heavy carpet of weird yellow-veined grass, played many scores of children.

"She loves children, that old one," said Ceulna bitterly. We have conclusive evidence that the children are bled to make Her live! Here on Earth, you graft young saplings onto old trees, and the young sap makes the old tree young again, so why not the same thing with people? The Hag learned how to do just that in some Hell in the far past . . . and that is why she does not die . . . and why she loves children so. Huh! it's no wonder—they mean eternal life to Her."

I couldn't answer, but I understood the bitter tone of her voice—think of the horror if the unscrupulous rich ever

discovered that evil method of the Hag's for staying young. It would be one burden too many for the broad backs of the poor to bear.

CEULNA'S voice had dropped lower as she continued, "Soon, you go, with many young men to fight against my people . . . to fight for such undying Evil as that bideous giantess, to fight and kill my people so our children may be used to make blood for those evil veins. It's . . . it's too . . . horrible!"

My own voice dropped, sad and low, and I answered, "This has always been a harsh world of work and worry for me, Ceulna, and I see your own world isn't much better under the rule of my fellow Earthmen. I don't know what I can do about this mess, but Ceulna, if the time ever comes that a blow from my fist can help free the people of these two worlds from the burden of these damn vampires, I promise you, I'll strike—and HARD!"

It's not like my nature, but Ceulna's grateful glance as I spoke made me feel very noble—like a crusader or something. But I meant every word I said, then.

"I can't see how I can do anything now—but I will learn, and later the opportunity may come. Tell me more, Ceulna!"

She nodded, smiling slightly at the way I spoke her name, the green brilliance of her eyes shining with tears. "I have always done others' bidding and it may be I always will, but among the free people of Venus—my people—it is not so. They love their people, and life, to them, is a rich feast of love and pleasure. Some of us though, under these secret rulers from Earth, and under the priests of Hecate, we foolish ones who believed their lies, do the work and the rulers seek only to weld

our chains tighter."

A tear welled from one of the beautiful, limpid eyes as she stifled a faint sob and continued, "When one knows that the children she bears will be used only as blood producers, and be old with the antique, ancient blood they pour back into the children's veins, it's . . . too horrible. Some day we will be like the ants, without sex or pleasure, living just to serve the huge body of some ancient Queen—like Hecate—the Limping Hag, who lives on the youthful bodies of our children. Life does not get better for us—it's—but tell me your name, O my new friend."

I WAS falling for her—but hard. Still I thought that nothing was to be gained by letting them know who I was. I told her, "You can call be 'Big Jim' like all the rest of my friends, Ceulna, though I guess down here I'm just Number one-eight-seven-one-X—that's the number they gave me. But, I'm not so young, nor so innocent that I can't appreciate your beauty, Ceulna, and desire it!"

"Aah! that's better," she smiled, "I remember how your big feet followed mine when they sent me out to get you . . . in . . . here. You were so very anxious to get some place with me—I couldn't help but know what you felt. You should . . . know how I . . . how I hated to lure you into this evil life, but I had no choice. They see and hear over such distance with the ancient apparatus, that I have to—must—do as they ask—or die, as that girl died that night. She was a young friend of mine who tried to keep a young boy out of their clutches, and failed—but what woman could help such actions? Many, a great many of us die when they catch us talking, even as we are doing now."

"Boy! they certainly hand out the punishment for even little things around

here, don't they?" I asked, as much to bolster my own rising alarm as to make Ceulna talk more.

"They are unjust—so, we will talk differently after this—talk of the glorious wisdom of our Rulers, of the foolishness of those who dare oppose them. We must talk—and think—like this for you never know who is listening with the telemech rays.

At the mention of even thinking, I must have raised my eyebrows in disbelief, because Ceulna hastened on as though to convince me.

"Yes, even your thoughts must be guarded. When you know, or feel, someone is listening to your thought, my handsome friend, you must think as if you loved to be treated as an animal to be fed upon, or some of the 'watchers' will report you to the Rulers as an enemy, and you saw yourself what they do to an enemy."

"Watchers," Ceulna?" I asked, "What are they?"

"The Watchers are the spies of the Rulers," Ceulna spoke rapidly with quick glances over her shoulders as though she expected someone to catch us here in this weird apartment a mile under the earth. "The watchers stay at the telemech screens listening to others' thoughts—thoughts they hasten to report to the Rulers, trying to curry their favor. But not many of them dare to do that for they cannot but help think wrong too, at times, and then someone else would get back at them. At least that's one thing we have, we who are used to this life. We can protect each other by such methods—those who don't do so, get it sooner or later."

"Surely, Ceulna, you are stretching things a little, aren't you?" I told her, though truthfully I didn't doubt her a bit, now.

"No, Handsome One, it is truth—there is always danger—unless we get

them first. That is our life. Remember it!"

I COULDN'T imagine controlling my thoughts so well that no one knew what they were, so I told Ceulna lamely, "Well, it must be hard to pretend to approve of robbing children of their youth for such a witch as the Hag! But, Ceulna, wh . . ."

"No, wait. Now I must tell you what to do while there is yet time," she interrupted, "—for I may not see you again. When you get to Venus, you must escape from these people. How, I don't know, but you must. Do not fear my people . . . or be afraid to go to them—you of Earth know little of pleasure or true beauty, or the emotions that the correct use of the ancient mech can arouse, but we Venusians have developed our science along the lines of those of the ancient Gods who first built these magic mechanisms—the mech of love and beauty—so do not fear us that still remain free. Go to my people—you will have to think of a way after you get to Venus—and tell them that you are a friend. Among those of my people still free you will learn something of love and beauty that will change your whole life . . . and perhaps help you to free your own people!"

Ceulna was now talking so fast that I didn't have a chance to interrupt her for more details as to how to find her people—she must have been excited and assumed that I knew enough of Venus that I could find my way around it like I would my home town. But what was she saying now?

" . . . remember, while you are near the Hag's men, or any of those that you think MIGHT be siding with the Rulers here—think of something other than your true thoughts, or your true purpose. Think other thoughts . . . or the secret Rulers will kill you with a

ray!"

Before I had a chance to open my mouth with an answer to this, a pair of girls came running into the apartment, bare legs flashing. They were mere children but had the muscled firmness and smooth-flowing movements of highly trained dancers.

They clamored at her in the Tuon tongue of the dominant people of Venus—the tongue of most of the white races on that cloud-wrapped planet. It was a very different sound than any earth tongue, sounding like a musical exercise of predominately vowel sounds, and prolonged oooh's, nnn's, rrr's—a very liquid language it was.

I couldn't make any sense out of what they were saying, so I just stood there and took in all the beauty of those six flashing legs and well-knit bodies. If these were samples of Venusian women, the whole planet must have been populated with show-girls. "Not bad!" I thought to myself.

Ceulna finally turned to me, and grasping my hand with a slight squeeze, told me what all the bird-talk had been about, "They are calling for my Spider Dance, and I must do it . . . wait for me afterward at your table, and we will talk some more . . . 'bye . . . and don't forget!"

CHAPTER IV

*From her black bloody locks the Fury
shakes*

*Her darling plague, the fav'rite of her
snakes*

Aeneid
Virgil

ON THE stage had been strung a huge web of shining strands like a monster spider web. It angled upward from the footlights to the top rear of the stage—the farther strands lost in the gloomy shadows. Half con-

cealed in these shadows crouched the huge figure of a black spider, twice the size of a man—a beast from a nightmare. (I learned later that such monsters were inhabitants of the vast forests of Venus!) As I took my seat the monster moved out over the web and did a slow dance upon the strands—a lazy spider testing his web with his weight. Then it retreated again to the rear. As the spider grew still and the web ceased to vibrate, out upon the shining threads sprang Ceulna.

Her superb body was striped with colored prismatics in insect simulation of a fly, her arms concealed in the thin membrane of a pair of transparent wings. A dizzying exhibition of tight-rope dancing such as no earthman or woman could ever emulate followed. She spun, fluttered, dipped and rose, flew above the huge glittering web like some beautiful fly, fascinated by the glitter of the strands of the web. Then she faltered and fell near the center of the web. She struggled and writhed with marvelous acting, too marvelous, I thought for that tremendous spider was creeping forward inch by inch and the suspense was terrific—the threat optically so real. The sticky ropes seemed to hold her inextricably. Down upon her rushed the great spider, jaws agape, around and around her he whirled, thin silken ropes wrapped her again and again. Then he settled to his meal. That spider was too damn real. I leaped to my feet as Ceulna's lovely body disappeared between the monster's cavernous jaws. I distinctly heard bones crack, and blood ran out of the thing's mouth.

A silly conjecture that the cruel humor of some such character as had entertained me on my first night had placed a real monster of the type the imitation body of the spider had been designed to simulate upon the stage

came into my mind. I could think of no other way the act could look so real.

But Ceulna emerged again from the spider's mouth, her face and arms covered with blood, the beautiful wings crushed, and fled bounding across the webbed strands off the stage. The spider seemed in a frenzy, his great mouth hung open dripping blood, the jaw appeared to be broken. The monster swayed about the web. The falling curtain cut off the scene. That was either marvelous stage craft or something horrible had taken place before our uncomprehending eyes. Impatiently I sat waiting at the table where Ceulna had come before. At last, she appeared, swathed to her beautiful chin in a cloak of brilliant bird feathers—like the ones worn by the ancient Aztecs. There was a long scratch on her face, across her nose and down her soft cheek.

"That was great, Ceulna, and don't tell me that is the way they do their ball room dancing on Venus! I thought—."

Ceulna had looked directly at me then, and the expression in her eyes told me that all was not cream on her peaches.

"Ceulna! Something's wrong! That dance scared me to death—I knew something was rotten in Denmark. Tell me, Beautiful, what's wrong?"

SHE sat down, her breast heaving from all that exertion—and it looked to me like she was going to cry.

"It's—that spider. I . . . I . . . oh, I don't know how to start! I tried . . . I . . ."

"Now take it easy, Beautiful," I tried to soothe her. "Just you sit back and relax . . . there, that's better."

At my concern over her, Ceulna smiled gratefully and I'd have liked to take her in my arms, as you do a rest-

less baby.

"Oh, you are too kind to be in this life, my Handsome One, it's all so unclean down here . . . I knew something like that would happen to me—eventually—that wasn't my brother . . . that . . . that," and here she started to sob, but quickly stopped the sound, though I could see the tears all set to start pouring out.

"Easy does it, Ceulna," I said, patting her hand. "What wasn't your brother—the spider?"

Quickly nodding her head, she said, "You see, on Venus that dance has been performed like that for many centuries. It's a favorite of my people's—the Tuon's. The costumes the dancers wear, having been made so often through the years, are exact reproductions of the genuine creatures—mine and the spider's—that spider wasn't a costume, that was a real Arakniden from the jungles of Venus—a monstrous survival from the age of insects. My brother has always taken the part of the spider, when I dance, and he does it perfectly, which made it hard for me to realize that it was this monster instead of my brother in costume. I thought at first it was my brother going through the routine ill or drunk; he didn't follow the things we usually do. When it seized me, I thought that my time had come. I drew up my knees and then straightened out, breaking the *thing's* jaw with the full strength of my back and legs." She sobbed again here. "But I didn't get away unhurt—look!"

She drew back a cape of feathers and showed me great fang gashes in her arm.

"Gods! Ceulna, then that was your blood. Who . . . what devil out of hell would make such a damnably fiendish substitution for your brother?" I was half afraid of the answer she might

give to that.

Shrugging that rainbow-clad shoulder, she said, "One of the ruler group—it means some of my careless talk has come to the attention of one of the blood-takers—one of those seldom seen."

"Who are the blood-takers, Ceulna? Surely none in this hall right now—look human enough."

"No, my Handsome Friend, none here in the hall, but these are only part of the Ruler group—the others are bideous creatures, many of them so hideous a sane person breaks into uncontrollable screams if he is suddenly confronted by one of them. They are cruel as the spider you saw, and they keep other monstrous creatures for their own frightful purposes."

"**WHEW!** Some pets these birds have!" I whistled. "But surely your brother isn't one of them."

"The Gods forbid! What really frightens me most is what has become of him? They—ugh—must have taken him to the lower caves—none ever returns alive from there but the vampires themselves."

"Now, Ceulna, I wouldn't worry—how do you know they've taken him?"

"I just know. They couldn't have made the substitution without his knowledge, and Mala wouldn't have weakly submitted to having his sister eaten by the horrible spider!"

I couldn't figure what to say to that—this place had too many queer angles, and all of them deadly. She told me she was sorry and when I asked why . . .

"If I am in the Ruler's displeasure, why so are my friends. I shouldn't have come to you now. It places you in danger—but I just had to."

It seemed to me that I'd been in danger since she had led me into this

magnificent wormhole, so I just shrugged . . . what the devil!

"They may do nothing to me for a long time. They love to keep someone in an agony of fear—like a cat and a mouse game, and, then, when one decides they have forgotten and begins to feel safe, they strike again. I . . . I can't stay here. I must flee . . . but where? It's almost impossible to get out of these caves."

"Well, Ceulna, let's see. The little time I've been here," I suggested, "I've noticed many of these dusty corridors lead to unused and seemingly endless caverns—like this we're in now. Where do they lead? I'd think they'd be an easy escape?"

Smiling, she patiently explained, "To a newcomer that would seem true, but the ancient exits and entrances are covered by time with rocks and earth—it's a mile, or more, to the surface. Strangers can't realize the immense age of this place—the indestructible nature of the antique work fools their senses. Oh, yes, we could get into the other caves—and wander on forever—finding nothing—no food—no water—nothing but tube after tube, and chamber after chamber—forever! The ancient God-built machines can do much, but they don't make food—they don't create water."

ADMITTING her arguments were good, I tried to reassure her, "It's plain to see, from the little I know of this mess, that you are doomed if you stay here. Lessee, now . . . look, Ceulna, a man can live for weeks without food, if he has to, and I'd say that the ancient builders piped water into these caves—someplace. I'd say the the pipes still held water if we'd look for 'em. Then, too, they must have stored some food—I've read that honey and some other things, seeds and stuff

like that, have been taken from the tombs of the Pharaohs—4000 years old and still able to be eaten. The Egyptians put this stuff in containers sealed with wax—probably the ancient builders of these caves did the same thing. I'd gamble my life on the chance we could find such containers and make our way out."

Ceulna, seemingly, didn't think too much of my idea for she shook her glorious head, then frowned slightly.

"No, it might succeed—if the Rulers didn't know the caves like I know the palm of my hand. We'd wander in circles, they would follow, and we wouldn't escape."

"Well, Ceulna," I commented, "what would you suggest?"

"I don't know . . . I don't know what to do. If I pretend nothing has happened they may do nothing to me—that's the way they are. You can't tell what they'll do—except that it will be horrible, and fiendishly cruel. I don't know what to do."

"Look, Ceulna, I've got an idea. Soon they are sending this small army to Venus—sending us in *some* kind of a ship, a ship I have never seen—but you have! You know where it's kept."

I was trying to appear as though I was just talking to one of the pretty dancers the Rulers had provided for the entertainment of their new troops, yet, at the same time, I was desperately trying to make her certain of my plan.

"Listen, Ceulna, go aboard that hidden ship—any way at all—then, later, when we are in space, watch from your hiding place and when you see me, whistle. If anyone else hears it I'll pretend it's me whistling. When I've found you, I can bring you food. Then, when we get to Venus, steal off the ship while it's being unloaded for the return trip to Earth."

It must have sounded like a large order, for she looked at me sort of helplessly . . . and very appealing.

"Stowing away isn't hard, Beautiful," I assured her. "Most of the crews I've ever heard of are more apt to help a stowaway than not. It is very probable, from the way this thing took place, that those aboard the ship for Venus won't know anything about it. If they do, they'll probably be sympathetic and help you, even if you are caught after the ship leaves Earth. I'd say your worst danger was here—hiding yourself aboard that ship as quickly as you can seems to me the safest course, but, Ceulna, I . . . I'm sorry, I don't like to say this . . . but I can't see how you can help your brother, even if you stayed here. Perhaps he's dead already."

WHEN I mentioned her brother, she couldn't keep the tears back, still the girl had grit, and she was a swell little actress.

"I will do it!" The poor girl's eyes glowed in gratitude to me. "You make it seem so easy! Believe me, the spider is an easy death compared to some they think up for us." She stood up then. "I go now . . . the less you see of me, the safer for you, so you will not see me again until we are in space. When we get in space, walk everywhere about the ship that you are allowed. You will find me."

The brilliant cape of feathers floated swiftly away through the crowd. A lump of pity . . . and something more . . . was in my throat. I was beginning to get my bearings in this Devil's Dream I'd been decoyed into. I swore a great oath to myself—an oath that I would taste no pleasure, relax not the least fibre of will, 'til I found a way to strike at this ancient, powerful nest of parasites on man! It was an oath

I kept, too. For even though they are equipped with the weapons and machines of the very Gods themselves, these ancient idlers have allowed their brains to atrophy—and I know why. The ancient, infinitely capable machines, which they spent no effort to create, have removed most necessity of effort from the Rulers' lives. Those ages of idling, of deviling poor ignorant surface men, have cost them their birthright of Will and Sense, the best gifts the Gods left us. Surface men have had to exercise these gifts somewhat, and, as a result, are more of a man, and less a horrible insect that can live only be bleeding a host.

I sat thinking, digesting the horrible setup of this age old cavern life, until the last drunken reveler had staggered off to bed. Then I took myself to my own chamber—a chamber filled with Farne's very audible snores.

CHAPTER V

Wish for the Wings of wind to mount the sky;

Or hid, within the hollow earth to lie!

" made this short reply

'Tis hostile heaven I dread, and partial Jove.'

Twelfth Book of the Aeneid

THE next morning they marched us a long time in the gloomily beautiful caverns. At last we came to a black and silent expanse of water, whose farther reaches were lost in the darkness. Under our feet the black rock stretched flat and smoothly glistening to the water's edge, where it ended, cut clean as a straight edge. At that edge was moored a vast ship. It was a tremendous vessel, like a submarine, a craft from the Elder World. Its antiquity was only seen by blo-

ting mottles on the dull sheen of its metal hull. That it was a still space-worthy spaceship I realized from Farne's accounts of them. It was probably older than the Pyramids, yet, but for the dull mottling of its hull, looked as if it had just slipped from the ways. Had this been its resting place through those untold ages of time? Of what marvelous material was it built that it was still in running order after all those tired centuries had passed?

My speculations as to its origin were cut short; a harsh order barked down the long line of men. Great doors opened in the side of the ship and our lines of green-clad troops marched aboard and down the long gangways to deep inside the bowels of the ship. Platoons were assigned quarters inside and I had a chance to look around. The ship contained round portholes but they were all closed. I guessed, rightly, that vision was obtained by the marvelous penetrative rays the Ancient Builders had used so much. We stowed our gear and then stood around waiting.

A slight swaying motion was the only indication that we had taken off. This continued for half an hour, then, quite slowly the cabin floor started to lean at an increasing angle. Shortly the after wall became the deck. As this deck slowly became less and less of a deck, I found myself floating—and the rest of my companions likewise. There we were floating in air like a lot of fish in a bowl of air. Gradually, the ceiling which had been the forward wall of the cabin, became the floor. Suddenly a sensation of falling upward swiftly faster and faster nearly robbed me of reason. In despair I called to Hank Farne.

"What the hell is happening? What goes on here!"

"Well," Hank finally managed, after laughing like he'd choke, "that's an

order not easily filled, my ungainly friend!"

"Dammit, Hank," I snorted, "this ain't funny, now cut that insane laughing and tell me what the devil is happening to us, or I'll drift over there and wring your scrawny neck!"

MY ANGER and the way I was flapping myself around in the air just sent him into gales of irritating laughter. Finally he calmed down.

"What a sorry hunk of frightened little boy you are—but I'll tell you what's happening—much as I can. You see, my short-tempered friend, modern science doesn't understand the nature of gravity, so there is no concept to employ in explanation with which you are familiar."

"Well, Hank, I got lots of time. Let's bear what you think it is." I was beginning to get over being miffed at his laughing and felt Hank was in one of his 'lecture' moods.

"All right, I don't think y—— Never mind. The ancient race who built this monster ship DID understand gravity—and a lot more. The same God-Race that built the caverns on Earth, and who knows on how many other planets, and all the ancient mech—they knew or learned, that gravity is an inrush of tenuous stuff going into all matter and becoming absorbed by it. Gravity is a reverse force—in many ways—to light which is an OUT rush of flaming force particles. These particles only return to matter as they become gravity, thus completing the full cycle of change which forms our universe."

"But, Hank," I puzzled, "what's that got to do with this falling upward sensation we're getting?"

"I'm coming to that. In the tail end of this crate, and along the bottom are the 'Driver Plates,' as they call 'em in these ancient ships. Incidentally, there

is an immense supply of these plates in the original storerooms. I've seen workmen replacing 'em. Now, the 'Driver Plates'—a strange dense metal they are, too—are hooked up to great cables from the power supply—generators like the ones on the dis-beam."

"You mean that they're flying this buggy on electricity?"

"No, not exactly. Just what happens to—or in—the plates when the juice is on, no one now living knows, I don't suppose. Anyway, the plates melt slowly away, and somehow give off an out rush of force particles . . . similar, in effect, to gravity, but far stronger proportionately. Thus anything near the plates starts to fall 'away' from the plates above, and Earth falls 'away' from the plates beneath. The more juice they shoot in the Driver Plates, the faster the 'fall' takes place. Get it?"

"I think so. But go on, Doctor, I'm listening."

"In other words, those plates are *reverse-gravity* drives. Some ancient scientist did a swell job of *reversing* the integrative process of gravity, and so got a beautifully simple process by which matter causes things to 'fall' away from it. Clear enough?" Hank grinned, looking like a dirty little urchin, with his straggly hair and splintered brown stubs of teeth behind his twisted lips.

MY STOMACH seemed to be turning inside out, but I began to see the sound cunning sense beneath his not too attractive exterior. I grinned back, for Farne was my kind of a man. You didn't have to tell that boy anything twice—he was usually way ahead of you.

"Clear, nothing," I answered him, "I don't suppose modern men *can* come very close to understanding those wise

ancients. This idea of matter being growing stuff is a new one on me. If I've got it right, all matter INTAKE is the cause of gravity, right? The ancients reversed, and speeded up this INTAKE process, then, the matter melts away, and things fall 'away' from the matter." I grunted, "Huh! It *sounds* simple. I suppose, though, all great things are simple in concept. All they did then, I guess, was put the plates between Earth and the ship and it takes off."

"That's almost it," Hank was being very patient. "But the fact is that the repulsions on either side of the plate would neutralize and no motion would result."

"Oh, I hadn't thought of that," I acknowledged. "Well, then, how do they get action?"

"Understanding'. The ancient God-Race understood the nature of energy flows and devised materials which are opaque to them. Now, the chamber in which the driver plates are placed is lined on the ship side with a material opaque to the repellant flow. They designed this opaque lining to reflect the flow around the plate and out the rear of the driver chamber. Result—all the repellant is in a rearward direction. Thus, the ship runs like a sky-rocket—by recoil. Though the source of the kick is different. That's as close as I can come to understanding the drive of these antique ships. However . . ."

Suddenly I remembered Ceulna!

"My God, Hank, Ceulna is stowed away on this ship and I forgot her! We've got to find her!"

"What the devil is she doing abroad?" demanded Hank.

I quickly recounted what she had revealed to me after the "Dance of the Spider" the night before. Farne sputtered when I told him the fake spider

of the dance had been the real thing.

"The Devils!" he cursed, "they go to any lengths to kill the thing people like best. Ceulna is the best loved of all the Rulers' entertainers!"

"We've got to look for her, Hank. Everywhere . . . everywhere she might have hidden. You know the ropes, so you lead the way."

THE two of us left the cabin, walking quietly forward. The whole layout was strange to me, but Hank seemed to know his way around. We hadn't gone ten paces when an officer stopped us. His voice had me plenty worried.

"Enlisted men are to stay in their cabins while the ship is in flight." He spoke firmly, but in the slow drawl of Southern U. S. A tall dark fellow, but his face was pale with his years in the caves and his eyes were dull as though his brain were asleep.

Farne was not taken aback. He smiled easily and flashed a badge he'd taken from his pocket. I had an idea what it was, though Hank hadn't told me just what kind of work he'd been assigned to since his return.

The officer saluted. "Sorry, sub!

I didn't know you. Is there any way I can be of service, sub? My name's Leadbetter, sub. Lieutenant Leadbetter."

"Perhaps, Lieutenant, you can." Hank was acting like an officer himself now. "I'm on the lookout for a certain Venusian—no particular description. Distinguishing marks reported to be a shredded left ear and a scar on his left wrist. Wanted under suspicion of working for the Tuons. Know anyone fitting that description, Lieutenant? To my knowledge, there aren't a dozen Venusians aboard, are there?"

I figured Hank was giving a fictitious errand to explain his presence on deck, but as an intelligence officer, he probably had full right there.

The officer scratched his own left ear reflectively. Apparently, he could think of no such Venusian. So, wishing us luck, he saluted and left us.

As soon as he was out of sight, Hank led the way swiftly aft.

"If she knows as much about these ships as I think she might, she'd be in the driver compartment. They're warm, and at a distance of several feet the radiations from the plates are beneficial."

(Continued on page 109)

OUT OF THE SILENCE

Franz J. Polgar, one of the world's most amazing living psychologists, achieved his marvelous powers by a mental rebirth.

AN AUSTRIAN star-shell split the belly of the night wide open. Franz saw the outlines of a squad of Italians hurrying forward to escape the cascade of light behind them. The barrage was heavier tonight than for weeks. From diminutive trench mortars to railroad rifles the Italians were pouring in every shell they could handle. Peeping over the low parapet before the trench was like looking into the grinning teeth of Hell . . . Well, the Old Man had said they'd shoot for this section as the ground rolled away too gently toward their lines, and the dig-in had never been adequate . . . A big mortar began feeling for his trench. One fell thirty feet to the rear, splash-

ing damp earth into his back. There was one out in front, maybe a little farther away . . . Suddenly the earth was flying apart and folding back—that was all . . .

The star-shells and machine guns of the Austrians had ripped the Italians bleeding back to their earthworks. Two first aid men walked stolidly along the section of blasted trench where Franz had stood. "I don't believe any could be alive. There's another leg here, sticking out of the dirt. Wait a minute! This one's fastened on. Give me a pull, here, Hans!" "All right! Easy there! That's a lot of earth." "See if you can get hold of an arm, Hans. This is no use." "I've

found it. Deep! Must be eighteen inches down. Hand me your spade." . . . "The air reaches him now. Take the spade and work down from my arm. Watch out, his body isn't all so deep." . . . "Pulse very weak. Have you a strychnine syringe? No? Well, small matter, I think he's bad." "Get that other leg, Hans, so we can roll him out. . . . slowly, his insides may be split." . . .

It was a gray morning in a gray world of pain—there was nothing but pain, and no word for that. Magnificent torture in chaos. Not even any room for thought. "Franz Polgar," the card at the foot of the bed said.

"*Die Augen sind geöffnet! Herr Doktor Capitän, aber er sagt nichts. Was ist zu tun?*" "His eyes are open, Doctor, but he says nothing. What is there to be done?"

The Doctor turned from the nurse to the staring eyes. "*Ja, diese Augen öffnen, aber die sehen nichts. Stok' wail!*" "Yes, the eyes open, but they see nothing. Look here!" He passed his hand three times before the pain-wracked face. "*Es ist nichts zu tun, Fräulein. Nur warten!*" "There is nothing to do, miss, except wait.

The gray world of pain kaleidoscoped through endless landscapes of torture. That pain was life itself in the gray world before the staring eyes. There were no words, no half-formed thoughts, no objective, no motion. Only titanic torture.

. . . Weeks later the gray world had become a space filled with objects like what he lay on, filled with things like himself . . . the others did odd things he could not do . . . vibrations they seemed to make, some that hurt his head, other soft ones . . . and still no words . . . not even puzzlement, except at the difference between himself and the others. . . .

One came every day to look at him and touch. Sometimes he touched him so that the fringes of the gray came back . . . This one's vibrations were loud . . . The one who stayed had gentle vibrations, and underneath them were others, even gentler . . . and the touch was soft . . . and still the incomprehension, the inchoate fumbling for meaning . . .

More weeks—weeks with the Silence, wordless thoughts beginning from formless feelings—thoughts and feelings that began to dash at the wall of confusion around them.

These fine vibrations always under the coarser—what are they? The gentle one has stronger ones than the others, but they are soft—always the same as her coarser vibrations, but infinitely finer. (To the blank tablet of Franz Polgar's mind they were stirring—in words he might have said they were like a south wind through the strings of a golden harp.) What are they? They belong to her . . . they come with her, and go . . . they must be a very important part . . .

More weary weeks. Eating, drinking, sleeping . . . and the angel . . . who was she? . . . Why did she come? . . . Was he anybody? . . . No, none but himself. Now he began to understand

the vibrations, the finer ones anyway. He felt the loneliness of the others, their despair, their hatreds, their laughter. He turned these pieces of the others like himself in his mind. Odd things, they were—full of pain and death and hell and torture and more pain, whatever those things were, except pain, he did not know. But they were real, and they must be important . . . he must remember not to feel like the one they removed a limb from . . . nor the one who cursed softly to himself about the treacherous woman he loved . . . nor like the one who saw a tremendous iron vehicle always coming toward him to crush, crush . . . he must feel like the angel . . . like the man in the corner who laughed at everything—the one that had three small ones at home, and great stretches of clean earth to feed them.

Franz was sent to Graz, in Austria, far away from the steady, deep hurrying roar of the things that filled most of his companions' dreams. Here, by himself, in the high-ceilinged room of a great rambling brick hospital, he thought about the powerful feelings and the weak feelings, the worthy thoughts and the treacherous. All things marked themselves off in two great rows. They were either positive and good and powerful, or they were negative and meaningless and destructive . . . Words were still sounds without meanings, vibration without carrying power. From the images of others' minds he knew the terrible things, he knew the magnificent things. Patiently, now, with great care and self-assurance, he sought to translate the noises who came and went, through their feelings and thoughts . . .

Six months after the mortar shell the mistiness over everything began to dispel. Word-meanings began to trickle back, snatches of sentences became clearer as they fell in step with the thoughts and feelings they accompanied . . . He saw the name on his chart, one day, and the twisting sword of memory slashed at the ropes that held it . . . Yes, they were right—Franz Polgar—that was himself . . . He liked to surprise them by speaking their thought before they could themselves . . . to tell them to do the very thing they were planning to do . . . Yes, Franz Polgar . . . the gray world before was a different world, and it was a different Franz Polgar—it was a little boy—one that ran away from everything, even himself. It was a Franz Polgar that feared many things, but especially he had feared fears. It was a Franz that hated and loved so that he was ruled by hate and love. How odd that the Franz there in the trench was still the same Franz that was here. For this Polgar—the new Polgar, he liked to think—thought first and felt afterward . . . Thank God! Thank God he had found himself . . .

John McCabe Moore.

The Polgar case resounded through all the medical annals of Europe in 1918. Indisputably Polgar has mastered telepathy through a combination of tremendous shock, injury and pain.



She walked forward with a
strange light of excitement in
her eyes; neither of them spoke



The MUTANTS

By ROG PHILLIPS

**Arny was an unusual child;
so unusual that an official from
the government came to investigate him.
It seemed that the atom war had infected him . . .**

HOWARD BROWN braked his car to a stop in front of a run-down white house in the middle of the block. He glanced at the address on the slip of paper lying on the seat beside him and checked it with the number on the house, then climbed out onto the icy pavement. He pulled his overcoat tightly around himself and walked cautiously up the slippery sidewalk to the porch.

There was no doorbell. He hesitated, then knocked on the panel of the door. The rich voice of a woman singing somewhere inside stopped and footsteps approached. The door opened and a rather plump, but pleasing looking woman in a slightly dirty house dress confronted him.

Howard tipped his hat and asked, "Mrs. Coates, I presume?"

"Yes."

"I am Mr. Brown." He handed her his card. "Your son has been brought to my attention as a rather gifted student, and I decided to call and get acquainted with him if I may. He is at school now?" and at her nod, "Then if I may come in I would like to talk with you about him for awhile until he gets home."

"Yes, yes. Come in and sit down, Mr. Brown. My little Army will be home in another fifteen minutes. You won't have long to wait. He is always studying. Would you believe it? He is only a sophomore in high school and already he has a scientific laboratory. And the books he brings home!"

A worried frown flashed momentarily across her face. "He is such a strange boy. Sometimes I don't think I understand him."

Howard smiled reassuringly. "Tell me about him," he urged.

"I don't know how to tell anything," Mrs. Coates said in baffled tones. "Would you like to see his scientific

laboratory?" And she said "scientific laboratory" as if it was a very satisfactory expression.

Without waiting for Howard's answer she turned and walked toward the kitchen. Howard followed her down the basement steps into the low-ceilinged basement. One half of the basement was partitioned off by a plywood wall with a makeshift door in the center. This she opened and stepped to one side for him to enter.

His interest aroused, Howard stepped inside to be confronted by one of the most up-to-date laboratories he seen in a long time, and he had seen plenty of them.

Along the full length of the concrete wall was a bench. The back of the bench was a solid panel of instruments and dials and plug-ins. He walked slowly up to it and examined some of the meters. Besides voltmeters and ammeters there were meters with strange markings on them that he had never seen.

He nodded to himself and whistled softly in amazement. Turning back to the door he saw a second bench beside the door. On it was a structure that seemed to be made entirely of very small coils of wire with hundreds of connecting wires. In front of it was a keyboard, the arms of the keys disappearing under the pile of coils and connections. A two-inch telephone cable went from this contraption around the wall to end at the front of the panel on the long bench.

Mrs. Coates was beaming. "What do you think of my son?" she asked. "Don't you think he might be a genius? No?"

"Could be, Mrs. Coates," Howard grinned.

The front door slammed and footsteps sounded above.

"There he is now," Mrs. Coates said

excitedly. "Oh, Army," she called. "Come down in the basement. There is a man here to see you, darling."

"Coming, mother," a squeaky voice sounded down the stair well. Evidently Arnold Coates was in that stage where the voice is slightly unpredictable. Howard remembered that he was fourteen years old.

A CLATTER of shoes too heavy for the feet in them sounded on the basement steps and then Arnold stepped through the doorway in the partition. He was about four-feet-eight, slender, his body normally proportioned. His face was all right, too, although his mouth seemed to be pasted on at a slant. His head, however, just escaped appearing hydrocephalic by a very narrow margin.

His eyes as he appraised Howard were a deep blue, the iris a trifle large, and they gave the impression that they did not reflect, but gave off a light of their own.

"A true mutant," Howard thought. Then he flashed Army a swift succession of thoughts. "Be quiet in front of your mother. I am your friend. I know all about you. I am going to help you. I know you can read my mind. I will keep it open so you can satisfy yourself. Do not take what I say seriously. It is to keep your mother satisfied."

Then aloud Howard said in a friendly, jovial manner, "Ah, how do you do, Arnold. Your teachers have reported to the school board what an intelligent boy you are. My job is to get acquainted with young men who show real promise and help them complete their education."

Army's mind was working kaleidoscopically and at top speed. His first impulse on becoming aware that this man knew he could read minds was

to make a run for it. But he could not leave the six months of labor in that laboratory open to the prying analysis of one whom he sensed instinctively would be able to learn its secrets.

So he was a mutant! That explained everything! This man seemed to be friendly. Perhaps he should play along and find out what it was all about. He had talked too much in school or this would not have happened. Army cursed the childish impulses he had inherited from his parents. And his lack of control over them.

"Speak to the man, Army. Have you forgotten your manners?" his mother was saying.

"O. K., I'll play along," Army flashed the thought message, then frowned as his telepathic sense told him this man could not read his mind. Suddenly he knew he was safe. He smiled and said, "How do you do, sir. I'm very pleased to meet you," and held out his hand awkwardly, acting the part of a normal fourteen year old.

As he shook hands with Howard he was reading Howard's mind swiftly, following conscious and unconscious thoughts and tracing their immediate associations. The more he read the more sure he became that this man was on his side and would help him.

He flashed a question, asking telepathically if there were others like himself, then cursed one-sided mind reading when he got no response to his question.

Suddenly the desire to meet others like himself welled up in him. So strongly—just as it had many times before. His eyes filled with tears of loneliness and a sob escaped his lips.

"Army! What is the matter with you, darling," his mother exclaimed. Then to Howard, "He is always like this. Crying for no reason at all. He is my son and I love him, but some-

times I do not understand him. Maybe if you can do what you say you can it will be better for him, huh?"

HOWARD laughed the confident, big-business laugh that always inspired confidence in the more or less ignorant classes of people. Putting his arm around Army's skinny shoulders he said, "Well, well, Army. Perhaps we should take a ride in my car and get acquainted."

Then he telephoned, "It is the only way we can talk and you can ask questions, Army."

"O.K." was the mumbled reply.

"You don't mind, do you, Mrs. Coates?" Howard asked.

Army's mother beamed. "No. Not at all. By all means he should go with you and get acquainted. Just bring him back by supper time or let me know when he will be back so I won't worry, Mr. Brown." She hastened to the foot of the stairs and stood aside for them to precede her up to the kitchen.

Army hesitated as Howard held the door of the coupe open for him. Some vague premonition seemed to stir in the back of his mind. He reviewed hastily what he had learned of this man, all the subtle overtones of his thoughts. No. There was nothing he could put his finger on, so he shrugged his shoulders and climbed in.

He looked through the window at his mother, standing in the doorway of the house and smiled and waved at her as Howard went around the front of the car and climbed in on the driver's side.

As Howard started the motor and let the car in gear Army asked him the question uppermost in his mind. "Are there more like me?"

For the smallest fraction of an instant a curtain seemed to lift in Howard's mind. Then it was drawn shut.

The interval was so brief that Army had not been able to sense a single thought. Just a flash of something horrible. Beyond his conception. Then Howard answered, "Why, yes, Army. There are several. All about your age, too."

Army was listening, but at the same time trying to analyze what he had glimpsed when the curtain had lifted from the secret thoughts of this Mr. Brown.

"You see, after the atom war, with its release of so much radioactive matter, there were quite a few freaks and also true mutants born. That was caused by the radioactive emanations altering the gene pattern of the egg cells in some people, and animals, too."

"Yes, sir, I can see that now," Army broke in. "I have always wondered about me. I knew I was different from my parents and from the other boys at school."

"That's right," Howard said. "But you didn't know why."

"No," Army answered. "I didn't know why. I thought for a while that maybe my parents weren't my parents, if you know what I mean. But I read all about all the races of people on earth and couldn't find any like me, so I knew that was not the answer."

"No, that wasn't the answer," Howard agreed.

"THEN I didn't know what to think," Army went on. "You see, as soon as I got old enough to have a few words I found out that I could read everybody's mind just as well as I could hear their spoken words. A lot of it disgusted me, but at the same time it all fascinated me. And there was a lot I could not understand."

"What was that?" Howard prompted him.

"Well—you may think I am imagin-

ing it, but some of the thought impulses I received were not from people around me. I thought at first they must be from people in other parts of the country, but that didn't hold water, because these unknowns thought of things they had done that no normal human could ever have done without it reaching the front pages of the newspapers."

"What things?"

"Oh—several of these unknowns had been torturing someone for weeks, and they were very angry because the one they had been torturing had died. And they had some kind of a machine they were using to spy on people with. People like the Governor of the state, and the Governor General."

"I see," Howard answered, and his lips drew into a thin line.

"So I concentrated very strongly one night for hours and hours, or it seemed like hours. And suddenly it was just like I was in the head of one of these unknowns. I could see out of his eyes and control his movements."

"Well, well. Now we're getting some place," Howard said, not attempting to hide the triumph in his voice. "Who was he and where was he?"

Arny became cautious. "I would rather not talk about that any more just yet, sir. Could you take me to some of the others like me, Mr. Brown? I have so wanted to meet someone like me." And there was a note of pathetic longing in his voice.

Suddenly the veil over Howard's mind lifted involuntarily again for a fraction of a second. He blanked it out quickly by replying loudly, "I will later, Arny, but they are too far away to do it tonight. They are all at a government school in the north where they are very happy and study together."

Arny sensed that Howard was lying. The car was slowing for a stop

sign. Suddenly he opened the door and leaped to the pavement, running swiftly. Darting to the sidewalk he dodged in and out through the afternoon crowd. Glancing back he saw Howard in pursuit. He darted between two houses and emerged in an alley.

He climbed over a fence and beat a dog to the front fence on the next street by inches. Not pausing, he cut through several more blocks until he was sure he had escaped pursuit.

Then he hesitated in indecision. Should he go home and destroy his laboratory? Or should he let it go? A flood of thoughts swept across his mind. Howard had meant to kill him. He had been instrumental in killing others like him. He was sure of that. Why, he did not know yet. In order to find out, he must preserve his life. So his life was of more importance than the secrets of that machine. Maybe they couldn't figure it out anyway. He would have to risk that.

Mr. Brown was an authorized government agent. Arny was sure of that, too. There would be a dragnet out for him, so he must become a fugitive, travelling at night and hiding by day, until he was far away.

Arny shivered. Already the cold of the ice on the sidewalk was creeping through the soles of his shoes. He thought of his savings account in the bank, and of his coin bank at home. Then he regretfully fingered the lone half-dollar in his pants pocket and turned toward the south side of the city.

After walking a few blocks he grinned at a sudden thought. He would have no trouble. He could steal enough food to keep alive with no danger, because he could read the thoughts of the inmates of any house he robbed.

His stride became more carefree. Soon he began to whistle a little tune.

HOWARD BROWN was in a telephone booth. He had left the car in the middle of the street and started in pursuit of Army, but gave up when the wiry little fellow started cutting through back yards.

Howard's party answered.

"Hello," he said into the phone. "Howard. He's the McCoy. My shield slipped a couple of times and he made a run for it. But he has equipment we'd better spend some real study on. Shoot a squad out to that address, and round up some experts. They will probably have to spend several days on it."

He tapped his fingers impatiently as he listened to the other end. "No! No dragnet. This must be strictly q.t."

He hung up, got in his car, and drove out to Army's house again, stopping on the side street where he had a view of the front of the house, but would not be noticed.

Soon three army sedans whizzed by, drawing to a quick stop before the house. The soldiers fanned out around the house while an officer with a couple of husky privates went up and knocked.

When the door opened they pushed in.

Howard waited another ten minutes. Nothing happened. He started his motor and crept lazily away from the curb. Then he shifted and sped away. The experts wouldn't arrive until morning. Some of them would have to fly down. There was nothing he could do here even then. From now on it was out of his hands.

TWO months had passed very slowly for Army. If time were measured by events that two months was longer than the previous fourteen years of his existence. It was now the first day of February.

Army was ensconced comfortably in a

hayloft. The noises of the cows and horses drifted up to him and lulled him into a half sleep. He had crept up to the barn while the farmer was milking the cows, and had waited in the darkness until the farmer went in to breakfast.

Then he had stolen into the barn and explored swiftly. Two fresh eggs had been a rare find. He had gulped them down ten seconds after he first set eyes on them. In the milk room he had found a dipper and filled it three times with the fresh, warm milk. It was the most satisfying meal he had had in several days.

Now he was curled up under the hay, his legs pulled up against his body, and his arms in front of his face to protect it from the hay and make an air pocket so he could breathe easily.

He heard the farmer come back. He was saying something to someone. A girl's voice sounded from below. Army winced from the pain of a sudden loneliness. The pain of it brought him fully awake, and out of curiosity he sent his telepathic sense down to probe the mind of this girl.

Idly he was aware that she was in a playfully teasing mood. She had a cat in her arms, stroking it, and trying to get it to play. At the same time she was trying to get her father to let her go to town with him today. It was Saturday, evidently, and she didn't have to go to school.

Suddenly Army blanked his mind in alarm. This girl had become aware of his probing. Cautiously he contacted her mind again, being careful to hold no thoughts of his own that she could detect.

She was still coaxing her father, but her mind was searching. Just as his was searching. On an impulse he telepathed, "Tell me about yourself if you are like I am."

He felt the flood of mixed emotions that welled up in her mind. She controlled them with an effort and began a calm telepathic recital, at the same time talking with her father.

"I am Amelia Gearheart," she began. "I am thirteen years old and a sophomore in high school. I have always been able to read minds and am very intelligent, but my head is too large for me to be attractive. Is your head large too? Besides my school work I have studied many things. Everything I could find. I have often wished there was someone like me in the world. Are you like me?"

ARNY could not contain himself. "Yes, I am like you in every way," he flashed back. "But there are men looking for me who want to kill me because I am like you. They are afraid of me. Don't let your father know I am here because he might let them know. I don't want to get killed until I know why these men are afraid of me. They are government men and have power to do anything they wish to. Be careful."

"Oh," Amelia telepathed happily, "I am so glad you are like me. You are up in the loft, aren't you? I can sense the feel of the hay against you. I'll tell my father about you."

"NO!" Arny telepathed peremptorily. "I must make up my own mind about him first. Much as I want to see you, if you tell him about me before I say to I will run away and you will never see me again!"

"Very well. What is your name?"

"Arny Coates," he replied.

"Very well, Arny," she continued. "I'll do as you wish, because I do so want you to stay. Will you live with me?" she asked with pathetic eagerness.

FRED GEARHEART was staring at his daughter furtively. Never in her

strange life had she acted so strangely. She seemed to have forgotten him entirely. Emotions flashed across her face at express train speed and there was a look of faraway concentration in her eyes that had never been there before.

It was almost as if—as if she were talking to someone by telepathy! That was it! The old feeling of longing to be like his little daughter so that he could be closer to her came back.

She became aware of his look and his thought. She flashed him a guilty smile.

"Daddy," she began impulsively, then stopped, a mixture of caution and determination on her face.

"What is it, honey?" he asked.

"What would you say if a boy just like me, oh—just happened to come along and didn't have any home or any place to stay. You would let him stay here, wouldn't you, and live with me?"

"So you were talking to someone just now," Fred exclaimed.

"Oh, no!" Amelia cried defensively.

"That is, I, ah—" She shot a swift message to Arny. "Please, Arny, I have the kindest, the most thoughtful daddy in the world. You will be perfectly safe here. Please let me tell him about you. Please!"

Arny had been busy reading the thoughts of Mr. Gearheart and was satisfied with what he found.

"Would you?" Amelia reiterated her question to her father at the same time that she sensed Arny's acquiescence.

Fred Gearheart, vaguely guessing what was going on, said, "I think I would, Amelia. I would do anything to make you happy, and if such a boy came along and stayed with us I imagine it would be the best thing in the world for you."

Amelia swiftly brushed her father's

cheek with a kiss and ran to the ladder leading to the loft.

By the time she reached the top of the ladder Arny had climbed out of the hay. They stood looking at each other, not saying a word. It was as if two people, each thinking he was the only person on a desert island and condemned to live alone forever, suddenly came face to face.

Tears came to Amelia's eyes, and she half lifted her arms toward Arny. He walked toward her. Suddenly they were in each other's arms, both of them crying softly.

The tears, and the comforting embrace, by some strange alchemy, wiped out the two months of cold, hunger, and homesickness that had been Arny's continual companions, and Amelia, sensing Arny's need of her and the difficulties he had gone through, felt a warm gladness steal over her.

They separated. She smiled at him with her soul and took his hand, leading him to the ladder well. Squeezing his hand she let go and climbed down with him following.

FRED GEARHEART stood dumbly a few feet away from the base of the ladder and watched them descend. When they reached the bottom Amelia again took Arny's hand and smiled shyly at her father.

"This is Arny, Daddy," she said simply.

Fred said awkwardly, "How do you do, Arny. You *are* just like Amelia, aren't you!" He took a step forward and held out his hand. Arny released his from Amelia's and silently shook hands. His small, fragile hand was lost in the grip of the large calloused one of the farmer. But the gravity and dignity of the meeting was a live thing that could be felt.

"We'd better go in the house, son,"

Mr. Gearheart said. "You look like you haven't had a decent meal for months. What you need is some hot ham and eggs and fried potatoes under your belt. Am I right?"

"Yes, sir," Arny answered. Suddenly he realized that he had been going on his nerve so long that he was almost sick. A wave of dizziness swept over him. He staggered.

He was dimly aware of strong arms picking him up and the swaying motion of Mr. Gearheart's walking as he carried him to the house. Then darkness claimed him completely.

MRS. GEARHEART was a typical, successful farmer's wife. Strong, efficient in her work, practical minded, and always cheerfully cooperative.

She looked out the window of the kitchen door when she heard her husband's call, took in the situation at a glance, and bustled about, dragging a rocking chair near the stove, and fetching a blanket to drape over it and several pillows.

By the time Fred had climbed the porch steps she had the door open, ready for him. He crossed the floor and laid Arny's unconscious form gently on the chair while Mrs. Gearheart shifted the pillows under him and held one so that his head would rest against it.

"I'd better get the doctor," he mumbled after he was sure he had done all he could to make the boy comfortable. Hurrying into the front room he got the doctor on the phone, then came back to report that the doctor was on his way.

Amelia was on her knees at Arny's feet, stroking his blue hands in a helpless, despairing way. Mrs. Gearheart was wiping his face and forehead with a cold washcloth.

Dr. Wilson opened the front door and strode in while this was going on.

"What have we here?" he asked, setting his bag on the floor beside the chair. Army's figure was resting in.

"Hmm," he said, his piercing eyes glancing professionally over Army's thin face, blue hands, and thin figure.

He shook a thermometer thoughtfully, stuck it between Army's lips, and then took Army's wrist, pulling out his watch as he did so.

Amelia had risen to her feet, and she, her father, and her mother stood in silence, watching the doctor anxiously.

Dr. Wilson pulled out the thermometer, looked at it casually, and then wiped it with a cloth he dipped in a bottle of colorless fluid from his bag.

"You had better put him to bed," he remarked, darting a swift look at Mrs. Gearheart, then returning his gaze to Army's unconscious form.

He studied Army's head for a moment, then glanced at Amelia's, and back again.

Amelia opened her mouth to say something, then closed it.

Mrs. Gearheart hurried from the room. Fred picked Army up carefully and followed her. In the bedroom she had pulled back the covers. Fred laid Army down gently, then stepped back while she pulled the covers up around Army's neck.

The doctor came in and put his bag on the table beside the bed, taking out a bottle and pouring some large, white pills into the palm of his hand. These he put into a small envelope, keeping one out.

He opened Army's mouth and inserted the pill, shoving it to the back of the mouth with his finger. Army's adam's apple jumped up and down a couple of times, but otherwise he did not stir.

"Give him one of these every two hours, Mrs. Gearheart," he commanded. "I'll be back again this afternoon. If he wakes up before then make him some

hot broth or some bouillon. He'll be all right. Just too much exposure and a touch of fever. Nothing serious."

With that he put on his hat, picked up his bag and left.

ARMY'S awakening consciousness first became aware of the silence. Then the comforting warmth of clean sheets and the weight of the blankets made themselves felt. He lay there with his eyes closed, gathering his recollections and trying to reconcile them with his present impressions. Suddenly the memory of Amelia came back to him. He opened his eyes.

She was there, sitting on the edge of the bed looking at him. He looked at her silently for a moment.

"Is it really you?" he asked.

Amelia nodded wordlessly. Her lips quivered. Suddenly she bent over and put her arms around him and buried her face against his neck, sobbing happily.

He lay there passively, a strange emotion twisting at his face muscles. Then he took her shoulders and held her away where he could see her face. Their eyes met, and in that embrace of souls a love was born which would never die.

IN THE days that followed Army regained his strength. Work around the farm interested him immensely. Spring came swiftly, and before he was aware that such a thing could happen the leaves were budding and the green things on the ground were replacing the snow in the meadow behind the barn. Now he was milking two of the cows all by himself. They were *his* cows. Mr. Gearheart had given them to him.

During the long evenings he and Amelia played games together and read hundreds of books. Gradually he told them all about himself. When they asked him if he did not want to see his

mother again he tried to explain how dangerous it would be to even let her know he was alive. The government men would never let up in their search for him.

He told them what Mr. Brown had said about him being a mutation, and the conclusions he had reached in his thinking about the government man's strange behavior. The government must believe that he would become a menace to society with his tremendous power of mind.

Fred would not believe it was quite so serious as all that, so one day Arny made an experiment to prove it.

Fred had said, "Arny, I think you are just imagining things. Your mother is probably crying her heart out with worry over you. I'm going to write her a letter and tell her you are in good hands, anyway."

"If I can prove to you that the government is right, and that I could be a menace to society, will you believe me and not give my whereabouts away?" Arny asked earnestly.

"Why, yes," Fred answered. "But how could you prove that. You can't convince me that you would harm a fly. I know better." And he chuckled.

Arny went to the desk and wrote on a scrap of paper. Folding it carefully he handed it to Mr. Gearheart, saying, "Don't read this 'til I tell you to. I'm going into the next room for ten minutes. When I come back you can read what I wrote."

"Okay," the farmer consented indulgently.

Arny left the room. They waited. Five minutes passed. A look of alarm passed over Mrs. Gearheart's face. She started to say something but didn't.

Her husband watched her, puzzled, waiting for her to speak. Instead she arose, walked over to the desk and picked up the bottle of ink laying there.

Then she went over and handed it to him. Even more puzzled he took it. Then she returned to her chair and sat down.

Closing her eyes she began to rock the chair.

"Abbie, what in the world—" began Mr. Gearheart.

Arny stepped through the door and interrupted him. "Read what I wrote now, and you will understand."

Frowning, Mr. Gearheart spread out the scrap of paper and read it. It said, "I am going into the kitchen. From there I will take over your wife's mind completely. While in control I will go over to the desk, pick up the bottle of ink, and give it to you. Then I will sit down again and leave her asleep. When she wakes up she will not remember what happened. It would be better if she did not learn."

He looked at Arny piercingly, then at his daughter who had sat quietly, undoubtedly aware of what Arny had planned. They both smiled at him pleadingly.

At that moment Mrs. Gearheart stirred and opened her eyes. "My goodness," she exclaimed. "I must have dozed off. That's the first time I've done that in a long time."

A crooked grin forced itself on her husband's face. "You must be slipping, Maw." He winked at Arny and nodded his head.

Arny and Amelia heaved a sigh of relief together.

TIME passed swiftly. Harvest time came and went. When they weren't busy Arny and Amelia would sit quietly together developing their mental abilities which were growing by leaps and bounds.

The day they were each able independently to take over the mind of a separate person in the public library in

the closest town, read a book they selected from the shelf, and at the same time be aware of what the other was doing and reading, while all the time they were lying under a tree on the front lawn, was a real milestone to them.

Then, two weeks later, they went even further. Army sent out his mind exploringly and finally settled on a young man in a city over two hundred miles distant. Concentrating completely on the herculean task of taking over through such a distance he failed to keep a corner of his mind on Amelia.

His "vehicle" as they called anyone they were controlling was walking along the sidewalk when he took over, so he continued the same, leisurely pace. A young lady was walking toward him. She glanced at him curiously, then smiled and said, "Hello Army. It's me, Amelia."

That startled Army so much that he lost his contact. The two of them discussed the new possibilities opened up by this latest success eagerly.

Fred passed them and smiled at their silent conversation. They were not speaking, but he knew and had grown used to their constant telepathic exchanges. He had also grown to depend on them. When he went to town he often took one or the other with him. Then he could talk to his wife through them.

He would say, "Ask Maw what she wants at the store. I've forgotten."

Army would telepath the order to Amelia who would find out and add any new items Mrs. Gearheart had thought of since they left.

THE day came for school to start once more. Army asked if it were necessary for Amelia to go.

"Yes, Army," her father replied. "The law says she must go 'til she is through high school. You won't have to

go because if anyone asks we can say you have graduated. By the way—"

He looked at Army speculatively. "You are just like a son to me. I imagine some day you will be, when you and Amelia are old enough to get married. And you have done your share of the work all spring and summer."

He cocked his eyes toward the grain house with a satisfied gleam in them. "It has been a darn good year, too. If there's something you would like to do this winter, even if it costs as much as—oh, two thousand dollars—don't hesitate to do it, son." He grinned wistfully. "You know, I'm just an ordinary human being. Not that ordinary human beings aren't all right, you understand."

He laughed embarrassedly. "Maybe I can't say what I want to very well. Maybe I don't even know what I want to say. But being around you and my Amelia, it has made my thoughts a little cleaner and my heart a little purer, knowing my mind was an open book. I have watched you together this year and been thoroughly content. But you were conducting experiments before you had to run away, and maybe you would like to pick them up?"

"Yes I would—Dad," Army said quietly, calling Amelia's father 'Dad' for the first time.

"Well, go ahead and order the stuff you want then, Son," Fred said, patting Army on the shoulder joyfully. He went out to the barn whistling and almost drunk with joy. The rest of the day he kept saying to himself, "Army called me 'Dad'."

Army stood watching him as he left, an enigmatical smile pulling at the corners of his mouth. "Carry on the childish experiments of last year?" he thought, "Not when I can build things I have since figured out. Especially not since *that* machine was to have been a companion for me, and I have a living

companion now."

ARNY was continually amazed at the things the development of his growing mind brought forth. He had been born with a perfectly developed telepathic sense. At the age of six months he had known every mental quirk, the meaning of every word, and the habits of thinking of his mother, but he was still unable to talk. If he had been left to his own devices in a world containing only individuals like himself, he might never have bothered to learn to speak.

By the time his first birthday had rolled around, however, he grew tired of communicating his desires to his mother by crying until she guessed what he wanted, and seriously set about the task of mastering the movements of his body and learning how to speak.

Peculiar though it may seem, it was quite natural that he learned to read before he learned much about speech. He had a photographic visual memory. While still in diapers he would cry to get in his mother's arms while she was reading. There he would follow the printed page with her mind and read through her mind, coordinating the printed word with her thinking.

In fact, he knew and could recognize perhaps two thousand words on the printed page before he knew the alphabet! Then he made the discovery by himself that all words were made up of just a few letters! That had been his first major discovery.

He had applied this discovery to sound in speech and had then concentrated on individual sounds and how to shape his mouth to make them. The mastery of speech took two months after he had thus analyzed it.

This habit of analysis had at first been an unconscious one, but in its logical growth it had turned on itself and applied its methods to its own

structural elements.

So, at the age of five, when Arny's mother put him in the first grade at the public school, he had the vocabulary of a college graduate, a scientific method superior to any other in existence, and an I.Q. beyond the ability of existing yardsticks to measure.

School was not smooth sailing, in spite of all this. His first teacher had been intrigued by him and kept him in her class for the full year to study him. He found that the other first graders, rather than accepting him as a leader and admiring him, resented his patent mental superiority. They made fun of his large head and thin body. He was "beat up" nearly every week at first by those six-year-olds who felt the need of demonstrating to the world that they were at least superior physically.

He had been bewildered, disheartened, and disillusioned about his fellow human beings by the time spring vacation arrived. In fact, he almost grew to hate them. But the three months of summer vacation had been a respite. And during that time he had decided upon a plan of personal conduct which would enable him to "fit in" better.

School from now on, he had decided, would not be a place of learning, nor a place to demonstrate his superiority. It would be a field of psychological study of these bouncing, clumsy puppies that were his school companions.

THE first two weeks of the second grade proved to him the correctness of his procedure. He deliberately gave enough wrong answers to the teacher's questions to remove his name from the top of the list of "brilliant" students.

He played childish pranks and got caught and had to stay after school. He played other childish pranks and didn't get caught, so that he would not be classed as a dumb dodo by his fellow

classmen in the second grade.

The whole program was a success, and his new outlook on the purposes of his public school education proved to be a much sounder one all around. From then on he had little trouble. And at home he advanced swiftly in his self education, so that by the time he graduated from grade school he not only had a thorough practical knowledge of children and teachers, but had also mastered several dozen specialized branches of advanced science and technology.

All this, however, had been in the nature of necessary and directed study. Each new phase of it had started a new train of development in his mental growth, and there seemed no end to the number of independent lines of research his mind could handle simultaneously, and subconsciously.

When he was twelve years old he finally mastered the principle upon which the brain operated, and the difference between the average human brain and his own. It was a difference in nerve hookup. The cell division pattern by which the normal brain was developed had undergone a mutation in him. His gene pattern had been modified in some way, so that a distinctly new pattern of cell division had resulted.

He had concluded that he was probably the only individual of his kind in the world. He wanted a companion. So he began to build one. A machine that could think and learn on the same principle his own brain used.

His embryonic attempt in that direction had been the machine he had left behind in the basement of his own home. It was no longer worthwhile. He had a living companion.

With that living companion had come questions about the future, and what he should make of his life. The riddle of the government behavior toward his

kind plagued him. The possibility of still others of his kind existing also intrigued him.

And finally, the nature of telepathic communication must be solved and methods to augment it found. That, perhaps, should be his first task. With that problem solved he could send out a call throughout the whole world that only those of his kind would hear. With that problem solved he could spy on the government man, Howard Brown, and find out why the government had killed some of his kind, and why it wanted to kill him.

THERE were many clues to the nature of telepathic communication. Army reviewed them in his mind. First, the universe consisted of only certain fundamental things, and telepathy had to be one of two things. Either a complex pressure wave in the basic ether or a complex photon sequence. Second, although thought processes were the functioning of the brain, there was a secondary structure present which duplicated many of the functions of the brain, but in a distinctly different manner. This secondary structure contained the telepathic senses, both transitory and receptory. In addition it exercised a coordinating and directive control over the activities of the brain itself.

This secondary structure was present in all thinking animals. Without it each thought process remained separate from all others, as in the insects. An ant, for example, would pick up a particle of food and carry it around for several minutes. If it came upon a familiar path it would carry the particle to its hill. If not, it would eventually drop it. Its actions were the result of uncoordinated thinking and of instinct.

A dog, though, could act toward a

given end. It could reason and connect previously unconnected lines of thought. Furthermore, he, Army, could read a dog's mind, but he could not read the mind of an insect.

What was the nature of this secondary structure? Here again Army had certain clues. Mr. Gearheart often killed a chicken for the Sunday dinner. Army had contacted this secondary structure in each chicken that was to be killed, and kept that contact while the chicken was killed. Invariably that structure had ceased to function within an hour after the death of the chicken. With the three hogs that had been killed that structure had kept functioning for several hours after death. So in all cases he had observed, that secondary structure was more permanent than the cells of the brain. They ceased to function within a few seconds after death.

How did he know? Well, telepathy seemed to have two phases. He could contact the mind of a thinking creature such as a pig and be aware of what impulses that mind was receiving from the senses of sight, touch, and hearing. Or he could contact that secondary structure and be aware of what the creature was thinking. On the death of the creature the first type of contact was ended almost immediately, demonstrating that the brain cells had ceased to function, while the second type of contact persisted.

IN THE case of human beings Army was distinctly puzzled. He had never witnessed the death of a human. Yet there were numberless contacts he had made with human secondary structures where the primary structure, the brain, did not seem to exist. That was another problem he wished to solve. His telepathic sense told him conclusively that human secondary struc-

tures continued to exist for at least years after death. But he was unwilling to accept this as being true unless the opportunity arose for him to contact that structure in a living person who was about to die, and maintain that contact through death, and coordinate his observations with what he already knew.

And the type of effort necessary to make the two different kinds of contact differed. Contacting the secondary structure required no effort at all. It was as easy as seeing or hearing, and was a permanently active part of his sensory setup. As normal a part of his awareness as was the sounds of the chickens and cows and pigs in the barnyard.

Direct contact with the primary structure, the brain, and awareness of the sensory impressions being received by the individual, required concentration and effort. It was becoming easier each time. Amelia could do it more easily than he himself could. But she did not attempt to analyze it so persistently.

Her self-education had been more omnivorous than his own, but less rigorous. Her analytical ability had not become so acutely developed. And she had not had to solve the social problems that he, as a boy in a hostile world of boys, had had to solve.

She was more sensitive, less calloused, mentally, than he. She was prone to look for beauty where he searched for elements and logical structure.

ARM Y ended his reverie with a crooked smile. Yes, he could use a couple of thousand dollars worth of instruments now. Going up to his room he began looking through radio and electronic magazines, clipping out order blanks and filling them in.

The weeks sped by. Packages began coming every day. They were promptly carried out to the shed he had been given for a workshop, unwrapped, and set up for immediate use. Electronic equipment smelling of bakelite and banana oil, bottles of chemicals, glassware, books, and just plain materials—spools of wire sheets of bakelite and aluminum, sheets of transformer iron, glass and copper tubing, and even a bag of some dark looking ore.

Time lost its meaning. Under pressure he stayed in the house long enough in the morning to eat breakfast. Mrs. Gearheart gave up trying to make him come to lunch, and took it to him, staying until he gulped it down because if she didn't it would still be on the tray at supper time.

Amelia would dash home from school and go out to be with him. He ignored her most of the time, and she would stand and watch him, trying to follow his thoughts and understand what he was doing.

He forced himself to stay away from his lab for two weeks during Christmas and New Year and be his old self. Then he went back again. January passed. February was half gone.

It was snowing when Amelia climbed off the school bus in front of the house. She lifted her arm to keep the snow off her face and plowed through the four inches of it that had fallen on the path since morning. Opening the back door she tossed her books on the kitchen table and greeted her mother without entering. Then she made her way to Army's lab.

Opening the door and entering quickly so as to keep the wind out, she met a sight that caused her mouth to fall open in surprise. In the center of the lab was a large, plastiglass sphere which had come just the week before. Army had said it was to be a three

dimensional screen, but she had not bothered to find out more about it.

Now there was something in it. It was like looking into a room through the eyes of someone in that room. Amelia approached the sphere slowly, looking, until she stood beside Army who was so intent on the scene that he was not aware of her presence.

THE room was an office. A desk was in the foreground, and across the desk was the image of a man, sitting in a chair. She recognized the man from Army's description of him. It was Howard Brown.

He seemed ill at ease. His hat was held awkwardly in his hands. There was an expression of respect and anxiety on his face. The picture seemed almost to be a three dimensional still picture for a minute.

About every ten seconds it blinked out, to reappear almost immediately.

Howard's lips moved silently. She could read them. He was saying, "I have tried everything, sir. There is no trace of him since he hopped out of the car that night. He has not contacted his parents. He has not been seen. He has not been heard from. Every agent all over the country has his description and his photograph. If he so much as passes through any city of over a hundred thousand population he will be apprehended immediately. What more can I do?"

After a moment during which he seemed to be listening, his lips began to move again. "That is too dangerous, sir. You know that they can take over control of a normal human. They *have* to be killed at once. They have to be killed before they suspect, or, like Army, they will escape."

He leaned over the desk, resting one elbow on it and pointing with the other hand for emphasis. "If only one of

them grows up to adulthood and his full powers he can rule the world. He can take control of the minds and bodies of every key man in the world's governments without that man knowing it."

He was silent again, listening. Then, "There is no way of knowing. Only by your actions. If you suddenly reversed your long term policies of government we could say that *probably* one of the mutants was controlling you, but not *certainly*."

Again a period of silence, then, "The only way we could be certain is if someone did something which ordinarily they could not do. For example, I bowl around a hundred and forty. If I were to bowl better than five hundred forty for a three game series, right now I would be inclined to believe that Arny had taken control and had a little fun with me."

Again listening, then, "What safeguards can we take. Should you give orders that if you don't behave a certain way you are to be killed? In what way must you behave in order for us to know you were being controlled? Don't you see? The *only* way is to ferret them all out and kill them. We have already done that to twenty of them. Only Arny ever suspected and escaped. We uncovered eleven of the mutants in our search for Arny."

Howard now stood up. After a few "Yes, sirs" he turned his back and walked toward the door.

THE globe became a transparent ball of greenish gas. Arny had flicked a switch at its base. He now turned his eyes on Amelia, a triumphant grin on his face.

"Now we are invulnerable," he telepathed. He took her hands and tried to dance a jig, but she was too full of questions to fall into his mood.

"Arny! Be still. What does all this mean? Does that man honestly believe you want to rule the world? That is strict nonsense. What fun would you get out of doing that? Is that why he wants to kill you? Will he kill me too if he finds us? Stop acting like the fifteen-year-old that you are and answer my questions."

Arny immediately became serious. "Yes, my own, it means just what he says it means. That is, so far as he has been able to go in his thinking. It is true that I, and you, and others like us, are a menace to the status quo of the world governments. Perhaps not I, nor you, but our children, or our children's children, sooner or later, will have to do just what he fears. Rule the world. That will not be evil.

"We are as far above the human as the human is above the ape. We must sooner or later assume our responsibilities. You might ask, Amelia, why we can't just let our kind die out. Why we can't just not have any children, and let the human race go on as it has, living our life alone, and ending the whole thing when our time comes to die. We could, but we won't.

"I have a theory that we are not the result of radioactivities from the atom bomb war. That we are a deliberately produced mutation by some race from interstellar space. That we were created for the express purpose of bringing the chaos and injustice of the world society of today to an end. And replacing it with a secret rule based on justice and humanity."

He laughed exultantly. "But regardless of all that, I can now keep close touch with the government and forestall their attempts to find us. Not only that, I can rescue any more mutants they find and direct them to places of safety!"

Amelia now matched his mood. "That much I can understand, anyway.

Wouldn't it be nice if we could find, oh—lots and lots of mutants and start a colony of us somewhere!"

"That would be nice," Army admitted, "but until we can eliminate the threat to our existence headed by Howard Brown we wouldn't dare do that. This machine," and he pointed to the plastiglass ball and then to the workbench on which a bewildering array of wires, coils, and tubes rested, "will be our present safeguard and means of finding the rest of us that are still alive."

"Let's go tell mother and daddy about it," Amelia exclaimed jubilantly.

SOON Army was demonstrating his three dimensional screen to the older couple with almost boyish pride. They knew and understood him. They would always be loyal. "For folks like them," Army thought, "I might take over the world and force peace and justice on it."

Amelia read his thought and smiled at him, full of pride for his accomplishments and abilities.

Fred Gearheart was amazed at the screen. He had of course known what materials Army bought, but he had never realized such a thing as a three dimensional screen was possible. "How does the thing work, Army?" he asked.

"The principle of the screen is simple enough," Army answered. "It was finding a substance with the right properties that was the hard part. You have the principle in an ordinary magnifying glass. If you focus the rays of the sun through the glass onto a piece of paper it will start to burn. If you just hold the magnifying glass in the air the focus is in the atmosphere. Then where the rays come together the air heats up to the kindling point of paper, but the heat is carried away by air currents."

"That's right! I never thought of that part of it before," Fred exclaimed

in amazement.

"Well," Army said with his crooked smile hovering about his lips, "I built a scanner lense. A variable magnetic field, to be more exact, that focuses an electron stream at a controlled distance from the focusing field. The movements of the lense are made by means of alternating current, and the electron stream variations make the point focused on in the special gas in the globe dark or light. The result is a three dimensional image! Of course, the two secrets of the thing are the nature of the gas and the nature of the magnetic lense."

"Too deep for me!" Fred said with a chuckle. Then as an afterthought, "But how do you pick up the image in the first place?"

"I couldn't even begin to explain that," Army replied. "To begin with I would have to give you a lecture on primary and secondary structures, and you would never begin to know what I was really talking about. Let's just say that I have a machine that can pick up thought waves, and it can be tuned to any given mind within a radius of two hundred miles or so, and that this machine translates the thought waves into an alternating current that can be fed into the three dimensional screen as a duplicate of what the person in contact sees. Good enough, Dad?"

"Good enough, Son," Mr. Gearheart said, putting his calloused hand on Army's thin shoulder affectionately and smiling at him.

THERE now began a period of detailed spy activity that kept both Army and Amelia busy. They became better acquainted with many government officials and their duties than these officials were themselves.

In an experimental way Army started

interfering here and there with the routine of these officials, just to build up experience and a safe technique.

April rolled around. Then he began something he had been thinking about for several months. "It's like this," he broached the subject to Amelia. "There may be only the two of us in all the universe. Someday it may no longer be possible for us to remain here on the farm. Due to the dual nature of telepathy it is not possible for us to talk to anyone else directly by telepathy, but we can take over the control of their brains at times, force certain idea patterns on them with associations from their own thinking. Then sooner or later they will 'recall' those ideas and either think they are original, or, if there is a feeling of strangeness about the memory, think they are receiving 'inspiration'."

"You mean we can't telepath to them because they have no telepathic sense?" asked Amelia.

"That's the funny part of it," Army replied. "They *do* have a telepathic sense or we could not read anyone's minds but each other's! They telepath all their thoughts quite as easily as we do, but they can't receive!"

"It's like a group of people who are all deaf but can all talk normally. They would have to talk with their hands to understand one another even though they could all speak, because none of them could hear!"

"Well, why can't they hear with their telepathic sense like we do?" Amelia persisted.

"That I don't know yet," Army answered simply. "I do know that the sense of telepathy resides in the secondary structure that continues to exist after death, and that when it is no longer in the body its receiving power gradually becomes augmented. I think that when it is in the skull, nest-

ing somewhere in the nerve tissue of the brain, its position is not conducive to telepathic reception."

"Why not, Army?"

"Probably because the incoming telepathic message cannot reach it, or possibly it becomes too distorted by adjacent matter and electrical fields."

"Then why can we receive? Is our secondary structure different?" asked Amelia.

"That, too, I don't know. I don't think our secondary structure is a bit different. I think the whole thing revolves around the mutated gene that develops the brain structure, the primary structure. That change in the order of cell division placed our secondary structure in a more advantageous position in the brain tissue!"

"WHAT is this 'secondary structure' that you are always talking about?"

Army sighed. "You are always asking questions I can't answer! Everything I know about it indicates that is nothing more nor less than the nucleus of a single cell. But what a nucleus! A molecule capable of all the thought processes of the whole brain structure minus the senses, but plus the faculty of coordination of the thought processes of the brain tissue. Why do I think that?" he asked, anticipating her next question. "Because it continues to exist after the brain ceases to function. For years, at least, as you well know."

"Yes, I know," answered Amelia, remembering all the contacts she had had with such entities.

"If it were a multicellular structure it would be destroyed with the rest of the brain structure," Army concluded. Then he added, "Let's go to bed."

Hand in hand they left the lab and walked slowly to the house. At the door to her room, when Army attempted

to release Amelia's hand, she clung tightly to it and leaned over swiftly and kissed him. Then, releasing his hand she scurried through her door and slammed it.

Her thoughts, as Army concentrated on them completely mystified, were unintelligible. Suddenly they blanked out.

"Well, I'll be darned!" he exclaimed aloud to himself. He continued on to his own room feeling vaguely disturbed. "I'll analyze that in the morning," he added to himself, climbing into bed.

THE next morning, however, something happened that brushed everything else from his mind. Army arose as usual at five o'clock, being awakened by the movements and sounds of Mr. Gearheart as he got dressed. Hurrying out to the lab to turn on the screen for a ten-minute survey before milking his two cows, he opened the door to find he had forgotten to shut it off the night before.

And evidently Mr. Brown, to whom the machine had been left attuned had neglected to be shut off and retire, also. The screen showed a wooded ravine, and through the trees could be seen a long, wooden building.

The building jogged up and down and grew gradually larger, indicating that Mr. Brown was stalking forward. After a few minutes of this the interior of the building appeared on the screen, framed by the crosspieces of a window sash.

The interior was almost completely filled by a round, cigar shaped object. Obviously, from its shape and location, a space ship under construction.

The scene shifted abruptly to the right and then to the left along the outside wall, revealing several men in military uniform. Then it returned to a steady portrayal of the space ship.

Suddenly a door at the far end of the building opened and a boy who might have been Army's brother stepped into view. He was followed by another boy and two girls, also mutants.

With hands that shook from anxiety and excitement Army turned to the machine on the bench and checked the instruments for direction and distance of reception. These he compared with a map.

His finger came to rest on a point just southeast of Salt Lake City. Over four hundred miles away! He telephated for Amelia to come at once, giving her the details. Then he sat down and, placing the tips of his fingers against his temples, concentrated as he had never done before.

Never had he projected his mind more than two hundred miles. But the receivers of his thoughts now would be mutants like himself.

Almost instantly he made contact. Out of the corner of his eye he saw one of the figures in the screen start in surprise. Quickly he telephated the picture in the screen, accompanying it with a rapid memory picture of the locations of the men stationed around the building.

The figures on the screen continued as if nothing had happened. Suddenly the picture shifted. Howard Brown was walking along the side of the building. The army men in the screen were also going in the same direction.

The leading one opened a door and disappeared. One by one the others followed. The screen again showed the interior of the building, but from a different angle. The government men were standing quietly, their hands hanging limply at their sides.

Facing them were the four mutants. Suddenly the scene veered upward sharply. A momentary view of the plank floor was followed by darkness.

ARNY telephated a frantic message.

A moment passed, then the scene again came down into the screen. Uniformed men were laying on their stomachs and the two girls and one of the boys were busy tying arms and legs with stout rope.

The scene shook as Howard was being bound, but he was allowed to remain standing.

Amelia had entered the lab during all this. She stood quietly, watching. There followed an hour of telephated exchanges. Amelia followed through Arny's mind.

Finally Arny relaxed. Turning to Amelia he took her in his arms, and together they let their emotions have free reign. Ten minutes later they appeared at the breakfast table with tear-streaked faces and radiant smiles.

Explanations to the farmer and his wife, and eager planning took a good share of the morning. It was finally settled that Fred and Amelia were to take the car and go get the other mutants, while Arny would stay and do the necessary farm work. The trip would take almost two days in Mr. Gearheart's ten-year-old sedan. If everything went smoothly they should return by the next evening.

At eleven o'clock the sedan disappeared down the road. Arny and Mrs. Gearheart stood by the side of the road and waved until it was out of sight.

Then Arny ran to the lab to keep check on developments, and study these new found mutants. He wanted to learn all about them. Why they were building a space ship, and many other things. But over and above all this he wanted to make a certain little gadget before these new mutants got within range of easy telepathic discourse.

THE journey took much less time than Fred had expected. He had last

made the trip twenty years before, and the highway had changed entirely. After about fifty miles he had cut into the two-hundred-mile-an-hour arterial from Chicago to Salt Lake City, one of the network of eight-lane super highways that now cut the nation into over four hundred easy-to-get-to areas.

On this, with the example of other cars zooming past him, he had speeded up to seventy, then after a few miles with nothing happening he had "opened 'er up" to ninety miles an hour—all he could get out of her.

Amelia was thrilled and excited over every new thing she saw. Having never been more than five miles from home before in her life, she was awed and impressed by the lavishness of nature. The farmlands were left behind. Mile after mile of sage brush and barren, washed down hills and mountains replaced them.

Cathedral Rock, on the old Mormon Trail amazed her. Fred stopped the car there for dinner, and after they had eaten they climbed to the top. Amelia rubbed her hand along the worn surface of the formation and exclaimed in wonder that a rock that could be worn away easily by the palm of the hand could withstand centuries of wear by wind and rain.

Mr. Gearheart pointed out dryly that it never rained here. He was completely unimpressed.

A few miles beyond Cathedral Rock Amelia made her first contact with the four mutants. They had been over this territory themselves, so were able to guide her. By sundown Fred pulled the car to the side of the road a hundred yards from the wooded ravine containing the four mutants and their space ship.

As he stopped the motor four figures emerged from the brush at the side of the road carrying boxes.

Fred climbed out and opened the trunk compartment for the boxes. "What are you going to do about your ship and the government men?" he asked.

"We'll leave them where they are for the time being," one of the boys replied. He held out his hand and added, "My name is George Lander."

Fred gravely shook his hand. Then the other three introduced themselves. Arthur Baker was the other boy, and the girl's names were Mildred Sullivan and Ruth Soss.

"Won't the government men get away?" asked Fred Gearheart.

"No," George Landes set him at rest. "We locked them in the space ship. They have food enough for several months and will be unable to escape because the exit hatch is now welded shut."

"Oh," Fred answered, satisfied.

ARNY had given up trying to keep in mental contact with the four mutants after his first success. The distance was too great. But he kept his screen on, and kept watch on it from time to time as he busied himself at the workbench.

Skillfully his swift fingers built a strange electronic structure of wires and metal boxes containing tubes, coils, condensers, and a thing of his own invention which he called a coordinator.

His occasional glances toward the screen kept him informed of the proceedings of the four mutants. He read the lips of the one that spoke to the government men and knew that they were to be sealed in the space ship, and its hatch was to be welded closed. He nodded to himself in approval over that.

When the men were herded into the ship he watched with interest as they explored its interior.

Finally his gadget was finished. He

placed it in a radio cabinet, attached a couple of dials, then switched it on. No sound came forth. He turned the dials until he seemed satisfied with their setting. Then he pulled the cord loose from the light socket.

Now he went out, returning in a moment with a shovel and a crowbar. Prying up a plank in the floor near the bench he dug a hole large enough to accommodate the gadget. Finally it was in its hiding place, the cord running underneath the floor to come up behind the workbench where it hooked into the outlet in the wall.

His work finished, he sat down and watched the government men in the three dimensional screen for awhile. Then he shut off the screen and left the lab to do the evening chores.

At nine o'clock he returned and switched on the machine again. The screen remained blank. Arny went over to the bench and looked at the meters for awhile, then, with a frown of uneasiness on his young face, shut the screen off again and went back into the house.

THE headlights of Mr. Gearheart's car as it bounced over the shallow ditch in turning into the driveway flashed into Arny's window, awakening him. He turned on the light and looked at the alarm clock on his dresser. Three-thirty.

By the time the occupants of the car had climbed to the grounds at the foot of the kitchen steps he had dressed and reached the back door. He turned on the light and went out to welcome them.

"Arny!" Amelia exclaimed, "What is wrong around here now? We all lost our ability to telepath almost as soon as we turned off the national highway."

Arny laughed uncomfortably. "It's nothing serious. Just a gadget." He smiled at the newcomers. "If you don't

mind, I would like to leave that gadget running for a few days until I am entirely sure of all of you. There are certain things that—shall we say . . . need to be straightened out?—before I let my mind open to the probings of yours.” He shrugged his shoulders and spread out his hands in an apologetic expression. “I have never learned to blank my thoughts as Amelia has, for example, and as you four probably have.”

“But how can those things be straightened out if we are not able to exchange thoughts?” asked George Lander, his voice betraying his effort to control his anger at this dictatorial procedure.

“Why, the way Mr. and Mrs. Gearheart exchange thought, and in front of them so that they can know all about you too,” Army answered, a faint trace of mockery in his voice. “At any rate, you will have to keep out of sight so that people won’t see you and start talk that might end up in the wrong place. If that happened we would all have to run into hiding, and some of us might get caught!”

Mrs. Gearheart came out at this moment, and before they knew it they were all sitting around the kitchen table enjoying a good breakfast.

“Where are you all from, and how did you get together?” Army asked, halfway through the meal.

MILDRED SULLIVAN spoke up. “We are all from Salt Lake City. There were five of us.” A shadow of sadness crossed her young face. “The other was Frank Walker. He was the smartest of us all. But he was a sort of a show-off, too. He wanted to amaze the whole world. One day when we had all gone home from school a man came and got him. There were several men in the car they took him away in. He telepathed it all to us. When they got a few miles away from the city, up

in the mountains, they killed him.”

“We decided we had all better get out and hide right away,” George cut in. “They turned around after they killed Frank and start back to the city. We thought they were coming after the rest of us.”

“Yes,” Arthur Baker put in. “We knew of a place a few miles from Salt Lake. I had a car of my own, so we all got all our things together and went up there and hid out. That was three years ago.” He grinned in satisfaction. “We got along, all right. We went down to Salt Lake at night and helped ourselves to anything we needed.

“When we wanted to order any materials we took over the order clerk’s mind in whatever company would be ordering that particular stuff and placed the order. Then we would receive it at that company and send it out to us the same way. No one ever got wise, although several men eventually got fired because they could not balance their books!”

Army frowned and darted a glance at Fred, who patiently showed his disapproval of what they had said. “What were you going to do with the space ship?” Army asked George Lander, who seemed to be the leader of the four mutants.

“Well, we didn’t know, exactly,” George answered stalling. “We thought it was a good idea at the time. We could do all our work in it, and then if we were ever discovered we could escape without leaving anything behind.”

“It wasn’t finished yet, then?” asked Mr. Gearheart.

“Not quite. We could have crashed out of there with our drive rockets, just as the Interplanetary Corporation is doing with their ships. But we were too afraid that we would wind up like

nine out of ten of their ships have done—bury it in the ground somewhere with all of us smeared out on the forward side of the bulkheads."

Ruth Soss now spoke up. "We were building an anti-grav device into the ship. We could have made it in a hurry if we had the materials, but they were getting wise to us in Salt Lake, and we had to go very slow in getting stuff. Then we could take off and land in perfect safety. Just float up and settle down at will."

ARNY, during all this, had been very busy with his mind. The gadget in the lab was a telepathic damper ray. It was tuned very sharply so that only certain frequencies could withstand its effect. These made no sense unless one knew the principle involved. Then their interpretation was possible.

Consequently, he was able to read the minds of these four without their being able to read his. And they, thinking that he couldn't read theirs had left their minds open. It took tremendous concentration to block off the native transitory process of the secondary structure.

He did not get all of their thoughts. He did know that they were lying about the reason for their building the ship. And he had learned the principle of the anti-grav unit they were building.

He had also gotten glimpses of many things that made him more and more wary of these four. Complete lack of inhibition and morality. No sense of right and wrong. Fundamental thought patterns that could not be eliminated which would make working with these four and trusting them impossible.

He had also detected certain strange thoughts in Amelia's mind. Pleasure—fear—attraction—revulsion complexes that had grown in her mind in relation to certain mental exchanges with the

two boys which they had regarded as "firting."

He had thought that because he was a mutant and was just and sensible in all his thinking, and because he had found Amelia, another mutant, to be the same, that *all* mutants would be that way also. But he was wrong, and a vast change was taking place under his casual, friendly exterior.

Now he could see that Howard Brown had had reason and logic on his side. These were the ones Howard had been afraid would come into being. Since he could not know *which* mutants would develop into a real menace, and since there would be very few of them, he had logically concluded that for the safety of humanity, *real* humanity represented by his own race, not by the freaks that came from the emanations of the atom bombs, it would be necessary to ferret them out and kill them.

Now the problem was his. He cursed his ability to see all implications of any situation. He could not bring himself to kill these four, who were of the same, new race as himself. Nor could he permit them to live and carry out the destiny implanted on their fundamental thought structure.

He had an impulse to rescue Howard Brown and say, "Look here, Howard. I was wrong about you and you are wrong about me. Let's get together and work this thing out." But he knew that Mr. Brown, convinced that his own course was the only correct one, would never agree. And he might be right in the long run. At least killing all mutants was the only *safe* procedure.

Could he solve the problem by killing these four *and* Amelia, and then committing suicide? No. There might be other mutants left alive who would try to rule the world tyrannically, and eventually, in a hundred years or so,

make the human race a slave race, its population limited subservient to a race of mutant leeches who regarded a human as an animal with a smattering of intelligence.

ARNY sighed in perplexity. He would have to do a lot of thinking, and he could take no one into his confidence—unless it was Fred, Amelia's father. He made up his mind he would do just that. Pushing back from the table he got up and said, "I suppose you would all like to get some sleep. Then you will feel more like talking. If you will excuse me I'll go out and milk the cows."

Fred rose to the bait. "I'll help you, Arny. Then maybe I'll take a nap later in the morning."

The two left the house with Mrs. Gearheart in the process of convincing the four mutants that they needed some sleep.

In the barn Arny told Fred simply, and holding back nothing, all his conclusions. He also tried to keep in mental contact with the mutants, but the damper ray made all except short distance reading impossible.

Fred, with native shrewdness, said, "Why not let them play their game out and kill themselves off?"

"What do you mean?" asked Arny.

"Well, in my experience criminal thinking is always false thinking, and always leads to the undoing of the criminal. Someway they will get out on a limb and it will be sawed off for them."

"I don't think so," Arny replied thoughtfully. "There are four of them and they work as a unit. As a unit they have sixteen times the intelligence of just one of them, and one of them has many hundreds of times the intelligence of an ordinary person. In a few days at the most they will have

mastered the secret of my damper ray and overcome it, as I have. Then they will overcome me and control you, and we will be but servants to their will from then on."

"Is there any way to prevent that?" Fred asked sharply.

"Only one," Arny replied. "If we confine them in an escape proof cell and keep the damper ray turned on full blast they will be unable to escape and also unable to force anyone outside to let them out."

The barn door suddenly swung open. Framed in the opening were the two mutants, George and Arthur. Arthur held Mr. Gearheart's hunting rifle loosely, ready to raise it and fire at an instant's notice.

"All right," George demanded harshly. "Get down on your stomachs so we can tie you up."

FRED and Arny stared in open mouth consternation. Staring at them was not so much personal danger as defeat for the whole human race. That thought flashed through both their minds.

Fred gauged the distance to the two in the doorway. It was too far. Suddenly he dodged behind a cow. "I hope they don't shoot Esmerelda," he muttered, picking up the milking stool and throwing it at the doorway.

It landed too late. The two mutants had backed out and locked the door. Arny and Fred made a dash for the hayloft. The only other exit was from there. Fred reached the ladder first and climbed up.

As his head rose above the loft floor he saw that the mutants had fired the hay. The only escape was a seething mass of flame!

WHEN Mr. Gearheart and Arny left the house to do the morning

milking Mrs. Gearheart herded the two boys, George and Arthur, into Arny's room and the two girls, Mildred and Ruth, into Amelia's room. Then she hustled back downstairs to the kitchen to tell Amelia to sleep in her and Fred's bed, and to get started on a day of baking pies, a chicken or two, and other delicacies for her new guests.

As soon as Amelia had gone upstairs she went out to the wood shed, just a few feet from the back steps, and loaded her arms with wood for the kitchen range. On her return she backed against the door to open it, as she always did, and continued backward into the kitchen, humming a tune to herself softly.

The wood box was by the stove and near the door. She bent over to let the wood fall without more noise than necessary. The slim figure of George Lander crept out of the darkness of the dining room door and sped toward her, a stick of wood from the box in his hand. There was a sickening thud as it contacted the top of her head.

She fell silently, one arm pinned under the load of wood in the box, her face resting sideways on a sharp edge of the top piece of firewood.

She awoke to an awareness of a dull, throbbing pain. Her arm was asleep, her cheek felt as though it were cut open, and her head throbbed unceasingly. When she opened her eyes it took several moments for her mind to orient itself.

Moaning in pain, she extricated herself from the wood box and rose tottering to her feet, facing the window in the kitchen door. Through the window she saw the barn, its roof a blazing inferno from one end to the other, the flames leaping twenty feet into the air.

The memory of Fred and Arny going to the barn shocked her into instant action. She opened the door and rushed

to the barn door. It was closed, pin slipped into the hasp. In an instant she had the door open. Fred leaped out and caught her as she fainted.

Arny dashed by them and ran to the house. He noticed the car was gone as he went up the kitchen steps. A quick search of the house showed him that the four mutants were gone and that they had taken Amelia with them.

Frantic with anxiety though he was, he nevertheless forced himself to be calm. From now on it must be a battle of minds. His against four equal minds that worked as a unit.

TROTting out to the lab he dug up the damper ray box and quickly converted its power unit to dry cells, so that he could take it with him. In the midst of this Fred came into the lab. Without looking at him Arny commanded, "Call up the local air field and charter a plane for Salt Lake City and call a taxi. You will have to go with me to arrange for the rental of a car when we get there."

"Okay, Arny, my boy," Fred replied, a great sadness in his voice. He knew what Arny was up against and how little he could do to help.

Arny had put the last finishing touches to the converted damper ray when the honk of the taxi announced its arrival. Picking it up he hurried out to the taxi, reaching it just ahead of Fred, who carried a hastily stuffed suitcase.

In silence they rode to the airfield, and in silence they climbed into the awaiting plane. Two hours later in Salt Lake City Arny waved goodbye to Fred and left the city in a Drive Yourself sedan.

In the back seat was a package which had caused Fred to nod his head in grim approval when it had been bought at a local hardware store.

An hour later Army stopped the car at the side of the road a little beyond the point where Fred had stopped his the day before. Carrying the package and the damper ray he walked back along the road until he was even with the shed housing the space ship.

Entering the shed he hunted until he had found a shovel. This he carried with him to a point halfway between the shed and the road. Here the path was narrow and would be gloomy by the time the mutants arrived.

Scooping away some dirt, he opened the package he had brought and carefully set out some bear traps, covering them loosely with the dirt he had removed, to hide them.

Making a trip back to the shed he returned with a hammer and some heavy nails. Then he nailed the chains from the traps to tree trunks, spreading more loose dirt over the chains.

Then he returned slowly to the shed. Looking at his watch he saw that there would be less than two hours to wait at the most.

He stared at the smooth hull of the space ship thoughtfully for a few moments, then tapped on it with the hammer. Immediately the sound of frantic pounding came from within.

Army sighed with relief. He had been afraid the failure of the connection between his screen and the brain of Howard Brown had meant the death of the government men. Now he knew that it had been due to the shielding effect of the all metal hull of the ship. As soon as the hatch had been welded shut there had been set up a perfect shield against all primary mental contact.

HE TAPPED out a quick code message. "Is Howard Brown there?"

"Yes," came the answer.

He smiled to himself as he tapped

the next message. "This is Army Coates, the mutant that escaped you a couple of years ago. I am leaving a message for you on the bench by the door. I am going to chip out the welding around the hatch so you can free yourselves. All except a couple of inches. I have some traps set for the four mutants on the path. I will leave any of them that are caught in them for you to handle. If there is a girl named Amelia among them, do not harm her."

He ignored the signaling from the hull and hooked up a chipping gun to the air tank. The metal of the hull was soft and cut easily. In ten minutes he had cut the hatch free so that it could move outward on its hinges—all except a quarter of an inch. This bond he knew they could break when they got desperate if he did not return.

Now came the most difficult task of all. The mutants would be alarmed if he left his damper ray going. If he shut it off they might sense his presence. He remembered Howard's failure to block his thoughts that led him to sense danger and escape. He knew that he would be strongly tempted to probe the minds of the mutants to see how far away they were, at least. That he must not do.

In addition he was worried lest Amelia step into one of the bear traps. A cold sweat dampened his forehead as his hand hovered near the switch to the damper ray box. With an impulsive motion he snapped the switch. Then he sat down to wait.

It seemed a century before Army heard the familiar sound of Fred's sedan on the road. Actually it was only twenty minutes. The sound died out as the motor stopped. Two car doors slammed shut.

A minute passed. Suddenly cries of pain broke the dead stillness. In one

motion Army turned on the damper ray again and rushed out of the building. Looking ahead along the path Army saw three of the mutants caught in the traps. George Lander was struggling with the bound figure of Amelia.

As George caught sight of Army he dropped Amelia and dashed into the bushes away from the path. Army let him go.

PICKING up Amelia he headed for Fred's car. Suddenly he recalled the note he had planned to leave for Howard. It was imperative that he do so or Howard would not realize the value of the gadget he had left on the bench.

Setting Amelia on the ground he untied her, explaining what he had to do and telling her to get in the car and drive to Salt Lake City, and where to meet her father. As soon as he made sure she had the car running he turned and hurried back to the shed, ignoring the moans of the two mutant girls and Arthur Baker.

Using the smooth surface of the damper ray box to write on and his ever present pencil and note pad, he hastily scribbled the explanation of the gadget and the fact that George had escaped into the hills. He hesitated for a moment, then added that after what had occurred he had swung around partially to Howard's view on mutants and would contact him soon to discuss the problem with him.

Then, grinning, he finished the job of chipping free the hatch, dropping the gun and running as the hatch started to swing open. In a moment he had reached the rented car and was headed toward Salt Lake City, not more than ten minutes behind Amelia.

TWO months went by. During that time Army had built another

damper ray gadget and a psycho-alarm. The psycho alarm would set a bell to ringing if George came within a mile of the farmhouse. He had also written a long letter to Howard Brown with instructions that Howard was to have his reply read in front of him by someone while he watched. That way Army could read the reply as it was spoken by watching through the screen.

He could have just read the letter as Howard held it in front of his eyes, but he wanted to watch the expression on the face of the one who read it in the hope of learning more than by mere reading of a printed page.

The day and hour Army had requested for this reading had arrived. Army, Amelia, and Mr. and Mrs. Gearheart were seated in front of the three dimensional screen in the lab.

The scene depicted was an office. Three men were seated close together in front of the desk Howard was sitting at. One of them held a letter size paper in his hands. He was the dictator of the United States. On his right was the head of army intelligence and on his left was the president of the United Nations Court. Army recognized both of them from pictures in the papers. He whistled his amazement.

The scene jumped up and down. Howard had nodded his head. The dictator stood up, held the paper low so that his face remained in sight, and began reading.

"To Arnold Coates. Greetings. You may be surprised at the personages present here. The reason we are here is to lend the weight of our presence to this message.

"We have all read your letter to Mr. Brown and reflected deeply on its contents. We are in one accord on the decision we have made concerning your offer. We, too, have found logic in

your stand, as you have in ours. But we have gone deeper into your position than you have into ours, if you will excuse our apparent conceit. We have brought many minds to bear on your letter. These are our conclusions.

"First, either you are morally and ethically bound to serve mankind faithfully, or you will be the enemy of the human race. That rests with you, now and always. An active alliance with you by the governments of the world could not change that in the least, nor could refusal on our part to grant you safety alter it in the least, because you are too logical and intelligent to fall prey to emotions of revenge for a fancied wrong.

"Second, thorough analysis of the gadget you gave us shows no detectable radiation of any sort by any method at our command. We must take your word for it that it does what you say—dampen thought waves. That is fundamentally the disadvantage we would always have in any concrete relations with you—the continual necessity of taking your word for things.

"Thirdly, we have discussed what possible harm it would do the world if you were to be killed, and have concluded that no possible harm could come from such an act, but rather the governments of the world would rest more easy if all mutants including you were proven dead.

"Finally, granting that you would be all you claim, work only for the good of humanity, respect the sanctity of all men's minds by refusing to read their thoughts, etc., you could not guarantee that any children you might cause to be born, and their children, generation after generation, would abide by any agreement you might make.

"THEREFORE, it is our unanimous decision that you, as well as all

mutants, must be killed on sight. We will continue searching for you, but with redoubled effort.

"We appeal to you, however, for the sake of humanity that you profess to love, to not alter your convictions about what is right and just in your own actions, regardless of the seeming injustice of our decision.

"We further appeal to you to help us so long as you are able in our search for George Lander, the renegade mutant. But we must warn you that even if you succeed in finding him, and in the process of doing so you are caught, your reward will be death.

"In conclusion, we wish to assure you of our gratitude in your recent capture of three mutants, and of our high personal regard for you, personally. And we sincerely hope you will continue to aid us in every way possible."

The dictator gazed earnestly out of the screen for a moment, then nodded his head gravely and sat down.

"The damned old idiots!" exclaimed Mr. Gearheart shaking his fist at them.

Army smiled sadly. "They are right on every point, Dad. Except that they do not realize that if I were to die the world would be at the absolute mercy of George." Then as an afterthought. "Maybe they do realize that and won't attempt to find me until George is dead. But we can't count on that, though."

"What are you going to do?" asked Mrs. Gearheart, infinite tenderness in her voice.

"Stay here," Army replied. "Sooner or later George will attempt to kill me. Then I may be able to get him. And I am going to begin something I have been thinking about for a long time." His eyes held a faraway look.

Amelia's eyes watched his for a while. Then they, too, looked through the wall of the lab. Through space and

time, into the future, for she knew what plans he had laid. Plans for the rescue of humanity from the slavery of dictatorship. Plans for the future race of mutants.

A sudden thought made her face

light up with an unearthly light. "I and Army are really a new Adam and Eve!"

Army, reading the thought, brought his eyes back to the present and blushed in boyish embarrassment.

The OBSERVATORY by the Editor

(Concluded from page 6)

TO FINISH up this month's offering, we have Robert Moore Williams' "The Man Next Door" which is a post-war story. That is, Bob is out of the air force and back on our contents pages with what is certain to be regularity.

AND now that we've editorialized about our stories this month, we've a few remarks to direct at nobody in particular, or everybody in particular (take your choice) which are not in any sense "editorial." First, some few readers seem to be worried about us; they ask us what we will do when we have to admit that the Shaver Mystery is really the Shaver Hoax; and how we'll like it when the boss fires us because of the tremendous drop in circulation that will come because of our sheepish admission. For those of our readers (they are in the minority!) who are certain the Shaver Mystery is a hoax, let it be definitely placed on the record that your editor believes it is a legitimate mystery, and that he knows it is neither a hoax on his part nor on Mr. Shaver's! Have you got it, or do we have to repeat it? As for a drop in circulation, and our subsequent donning of a "lion-skin" to make a living, we predict right now that the circulation we have today will be peanuts beside the circulation when we have paper and presses to put out the number of copies *you readers are demanding* that we put out. As to that, we promise that the instant it is possible, they'll be printed.

THE second point we want to take up is a blunt question to those individuals and groups who are so assiduously trying to prevent the publication of further Shaver stories, or the pursuit of the solution to the mystery. Never have we seen such co-operation! Incredible co-operation! Individuals, groups, organizations, mystics, mediums, crack-pots—all swearing that the dero are REAL, and at the same time warning us solemnly to "lay off", to pay no attention to them, to refrain from building those machines they describe to us. Oh

yes, they are all sincere. That's what makes it even more of a mystery. They are scared to death! The question. Are you nuts? IF the dero are real, then the LAST thing to do is ignore them; if they are NOT real, what in the hell are you talking about?

THE third point to be covered is that little matter of "proof." First, there is Shaver. He is a mystery, to begin with, and his stories are a greater mystery. Second, there is the reception given to those stories by thousands of our readers who amaze us by agreeing that "such things" did go on, and by confirming Mr. Shaver's experiences by relating identical ones of their own. Next is our personal experiences. Yes, you skeptics, a typewriter key did melt down in our office. We aren't lying. But it proves something *only to us*. YOU didn't see it; you'd have to take OUR word. We, like all our skeptical readers, refuse to take anybody's word for the Shaver Mystery. We want proof, and we don't expect YOU to believe us, any more than we believe 90% of the letters that come in. We believe only what stands up under proof. Enough stands up to convince us the Mystery is no fake!

MR. SHAVER has been keeping your editor busy developing films (your editor so that there will be no chance of tamper or of bad handling by a professional photographer who might deem a film worthless and cut developing short). These films are exposed by Mr. Shaver in his bedroom in total darkness in the hope that one of the ray projections from the caves will register on it.

Thus far we have one picture of Mr. Shaver, asleep (the camera lens having remained open into the early dawn); one picture which is just an unrecognizable blur; and one picture which seems to show a ray projecting upward directly through Mr. Shaver's head and into the air. This latter picture can be seen at our office any time by anyone interested. It has baffled the staff of *Popular Photography*; but being only one blurred photo, your editor cannot call it conclusive evidence. More films are in the process of being exposed and developed. Mr. Shaver says that cave tere insist that they will produce something if and when they can get through the dero guard ray. We hope so. At least, you can picture for yourself the interest with which this editor develops each film that is handed to him. *Rsp.*

CHRYSALIS

By RAY BRADBURY

Smith was a corpse; that is, he should have been.

But he came to life, and a very strange thing happened

ROCKWELL didn't like the room's smell. Not so much McGuire's odor of beer, or Hartley's unwashed, tired smell—but the sharp insect tang rising from Smith's cold green-skinned body lying stiffly naked on the table. There was also a smell of oil and grease from the nameless machinery gleaming in one corner of the small room.

The man Smith was a corpse. Irritated, Rockwell rose from his chair and packed his stethoscope. "I must get back to the hospital. War rush. You



He had to shoot—to kill! To
kill a man already dead!



understand, Hartley. Smith's been dead eight hours. If you want further information call a post-mortem—"

He stopped as Hartley raised a trembling, bony hand. Hartley gestured at the corpse—this corpse with brittle hard green shell grown solid over every inch of flesh. "Use your stethoscope again, for God's sake, Rockwell. Just once more. Please."

Rockwell wanted to complain, but instead he sighed, sat down and used the stethoscope. You have to treat fellow doctors politely. You press your stethoscope into cold green flesh, pretending to listen—

The small, dimly lit room exploded around him. Exploded in one green cold pulsing. It hit Rockwell's ears like fists. It hit him. He saw his own fingers jerk over the recumbent corpse.

He heard a pulse.

Deep in the dark body the heart beat once. It sounded like an echo in fathoms of sea water.

Smith was dead, unbreathing, mummified. But at the core of that deadness—his heart lived. Lived, stirring like a small unborn baby!

Rockwell's crisp surgeon's fingers darted rapidly. He bent his head. In the light it was dark-haired, with flecks of grey in it. He had an even, level, nice looking face. About thirty-five. He listened again and again, with sweat coming cold on his smooth cheeks. The pulse was not to be believed.

One heart beat every thirty-five seconds.

Smith's respiration—how could you believe that, too—one breath of air every four minutes. Lung case movement imperceptible. Body temperature?

Sixty degrees.

Hartley laughed. It was not a pleasant laugh. More like an echo that had gotten lost. "He's alive," he said tired-

ly. "Yes, he is. He almost fooled me many times. I injected adrenalin to speed that pulse, but it was no use. He's been this way for twelve weeks. And I couldn't stand keeping him a secret any longer. That's why I phoned you, Rockwell. He's—unnatural."

The impossibility of it overwhelmed Rockwell with an inexplicable excitement. He tried to lift Smith's eyelids. He couldn't. They were webbed with epidermis. So were the lips. So were the nostrils. There was no way for Smith to breathe—

"Yet, he's breathing." Rockwell's voice was numb. He dropped his stethoscope blankly, picked it up, and saw his fingers shaking.

HARTLEY grew tall, emaciated, nervous over the table "Smith didn't like my calling you. I called anyway. Smith warned me not to. Just an hour ago."

Rockwell's eyes dilated into hot black circles. "How could he warn you? He can't move."

Hartley's face, all razor-sharp bone, hard jaw, tight squinting grey eyes, twitched nervously. "Smith—*thinks*. I know his thoughts. He's afraid you'll expose him to the world. He hates me. Why? I want to kill him, that's why. Here." Hartley fumbled blindly for a blue-steel revolver in his rumpled, stained coat. "Murphy. Take this. Take it before I use it on Smith's foul body!"

Murphy pulled back, his thick red face afraid. "Don't like guns. You take it, Rockwell."

Like a scalpel, Rockwell made his voice slash. "Put the gun away, Hartley. After three months tending one patient you've got a psychological blemish. Sleep'll help that." He licked his lips. "What sort of disease has Smith got?"

Hartley swayed. His mouth moved words out slowly. Falling asleep on his feet, Rockwell realized. "Not diseased," Hartley managed to say. "Don't know what. But I resent him, like a kid resents the birth of a new brother or sister. He's wrong. Help me. Help me, will you?"

"Of course." Rockwell smiled. "My desert sanitarium's the place to check him over, good. Why—why Smith's the most incredible medical phenomenon in history. Bodies just don't act this way!"

He got no further. Hartley had his gun pointed right at Rockwell's stomach. "Wait. Wait. You—you're not going to *bury* Smith? I thought you'd help me. Smith's not healthy. I want him killed! He's dangerous! I know he is!"

Rockwell blinked. Hartley was obviously psychoneurotic. Didn't know what he was saying. Rockwell straightened his shoulders, feeling cool and calm inside. "Shoot Smith and I'll turn you in for murder. You're over-worked mentally and physically. Put the gun away."

They stared at one another.

Rockwell walked forward quietly and took the gun, patted Hartley understandingly on the shoulder and gave the weapon to Murphy, who looked at as if it would bite him. "Call the hospital, Murphy. I'm taking a week off. Maybe longer. Tell them I'm doing research at the sanitarium."

A scowl formed in the red fat flesh of Murphy's face. "What do I do with this gun?"

Hartley shut his teeth together, hard. "Keep it. You'll want to use it—later."

ROCKWELL wanted to shout it to the world that he was sole possessor of the most incredible human in history. The sun was bright in the

desert sanitarium room where Smith lay, not saying a word, on his table; his handsome face frozen into a green passionless expression.

Rockwell walked into the room quietly. He used the stethoscope on the green chest. It scraped, making the noise of metal tapping a beetle's carapace.

McGuire stood by, eyeing the body dubiously, smelling of several recently acquired beers.

Rockwell listened intently. "The ambulance ride may have jolted him. No use taking a chance—"

Rockwell cried out.

Heavily, McGuire lumbered to his side. "What's wrong?"

"Wrong?" Rockwell stared about in desperation. He made one hand into a fist. "Smith's dying!"

"How do you know? Hartley said Smith plays possum. He's fooled you again—"

"No!" Rockwell worked furiously over the body, injecting drugs. Any drugs. All drugs. Swearing at the top of his voice. After all this trouble, he *couldn't* lose Smith. No, not now.

Shaking, jarring, twisting deep down inside, going completely liquidly mad, Smith's body sounded like dim volcanic tides bursting.

Rockwell fought to remain calm. Smith was a case unto himself. Normal treatment did nothing for him. What then? What?

Rockwell stared. Sunlight gleamed on Smith's hard flesh. Hot sunlight. It flashed, glinting off the stethoscope tip. The sun. As he watched, clouds shifted across the sky outside, taking the sun away. The room darkened. Smith's body shook into silence. The volcanic tides died.

"McGuire! Pull the blinds! Before the sun comes back!"

McGuire obeyed.

Smith's heart slowed down to its sluggish, infrequent beating.

"Sunlight's bad for Smith. It counteracts something. I don't know what or why, but it's not good—" Rockwell relaxed. "Lord, I wouldn't want to lose Smith. Not for anything. He's different, making his own standards, doing things men have never done. Know something, Murphy?"

"What?"

"Smith's not in agony. He's not dying either. He wouldn't be better off dead, no matter what Hartley says. Last night as I arranged Smith on the stretcher, readying him for his trip to this sanitarium, I realized, suddenly, that Smith *likes* me."

"Gah. First Hartley. Now you. Did Smith *tell* you that?"

"He didn't tell me. But he's not unconscious under all that hard skin. He's aware. Yes, that's it. He's aware."

"Pure and simple—he's petrifying. He'll die. It's been weeks since he was fed. Hartley said so. Hartley fed him intravenously until the skin toughened so a needle couldn't poke through it."

WHINING, the cubicle door swung slowly open. Rockwell started. Hartley, his sharp face relaxed after hours of sleep, his eyes still a bitter grey, hostile, stood tall in the door. "If you'll leave the room," he said, quietly, "I'll destroy Smith in a very few seconds. Well?"

"Don't come a step closer." Rockwell walked, feeling irritation, to Hartley's side. "Every time you visit, you'll have to be searched. Frankly, I don't trust you." There were no weapons. "Why didn't you tell me about the sunlight?"

"Eh?" Soft and slow Hartley said it. "Oh—yes. I forgot. I tried shifting Smith weeks ago. Sunlight struck

him and he began *really* dying. Naturally, I stopped trying to move him. Smith seemed to know what was coming, vaguely. Perhaps he planned it; I'm not sure. While he was still able to talk and eat ravenously, before his body stiffened completely, he warned me not to move him for a twelve week period. Said he didn't like the sun. Said it would spoil things. I thought he was joking. He wasn't. He ate like an animal, a hungry, wild animal, fell into a coma, and here he is—" Hartley swore under his breath. "I'd rather hoped you'd leave him in the sun long enough to kill him inadvertently."

McGuire shifted his two-hundred-fifty pounds. "Look here, now. What if we catch Smith's disease?"

Hartley looked at the body, his pupils shrinking. "Smith's not diseased. Don't you recognize degeneration when you see it? It's like cancer. You don't catch it, you inherit a tendency. I didn't begin to fear and hate Smith until a week ago when I discovered he was breathing and existing and thriving with his nostrils and mouth sealed. It can't happen. It mustn't happen."

McGuire's voice trembled. "What if you and I and Rockwell all turn green and a plague sweeps the country—what then?"

"Then," replied Rockwell, "if I'm wrong, perhaps I am, I'll die. But it doesn't worry me in the least."

He turned back to Smith and went on with his work.

A BELL. A bell. Two bells, two bells. A dozen bells, a hundred bells. Ten thousand and a million clangorous, hammering, metal dinning bells. All born at once in the silence, squalling, screaming, hurting echoes, bruising ears!

Ringings, chanting with loud and soft, tenor and bass, low and high voices.

Great-armed clappers knocking the shells and rippling air with the thrusting din of sound!

With all those bells ringing, Smith could not immediately know where he was. He knew that he could not see, because his eyelids were sealed tight, knew he could not speak because his lips had grown together. His ears were clamped shut, but the bells hammered nevertheless.

He could not see. But yes, yes, he could, and it was like inside a small dark red cavern, as if his eyes were turned inward upon his skull. And Smith tried to twist his tongue, and suddenly, trying to scream, he knew his tongue was gone, that the place where it used to be was vacant, an itching spot that wanted a tongue but couldn't have it just *now*.

No tongue. Strange. Why? Smith tried to stop the bells. They ceased, blessing him with a silence that wrapped him up in a cold blanket. Things were happening. Happening.

Smith tried to twitch a finger, but he had no control. A foot, a leg, a toe, his head, everything. Nothing moved. Torso, limbs—immovable, frozen in a concrete coffin.

A moment later came the dread discovery that he was no longer breathing. Not with his lungs, anyway.

"BECAUSE I HAVE NO LUNGS!" he screamed. Inwardly he screamed and that mental scream was drowned, webbed, clotted and journeyed drowsily down in a red, dark tide. A red drowsy tide that sleepily swathed the scream, garroted it, took it all away, making Smith rest easier.

I am not afraid, he thought. I understand that which I do not understand. I understand that I do not fear, yet know not the reason.

No tongue, no nose, no lungs.

But they would come later. Yes,

they would. Things were—happening.

Through the pores of his shelled body air slid, like rain needling each portion of him, giving life. Breathing through a billion gills, breathing oxygen and nitrogen and hydrogen and carbon-dioxide, and using it all. Wondering. Was his heart still beating?

But yes, it was beating. Slow, slow, slow. A red dim sussurance, a flood, a river surging around him, slow, slower, slower. So nice.

So restful.

THE jigsaw pieces fitted together faster as the days drifted into weeks. McGuire helped. A retired surgeon-medico, he'd been Rockwell's secretary for a number of years. Not much help, but good company.

Rockwell noted that McGuire joked gruffly about Smith, nervously; and a lot. Trying to be calm. But one day McGuire stopped, thought it over and drawled, "Hey, it just came to me! Smith's alive. He should be dead. But he's alive. Good God!"

Rockwell laughed. "What in hell do you think I'm working on? I'm bringing an X-ray machine out next week so I can find out what's going on inside Smith's shell." Rockwell jabbed with a hypo needle. It broke on the hard shell.

Rockwell tried another needle, and another, until finally he punctured, drew blood, and placed the slides under the microscope for study. Hours later he calmly shoved a serum test under McGuire's red nose, and spoke quickly.

"Lord, I can't believe it. His blood's germicidal. I dropped a streptococci colony into it and the strep was annihilated in eight seconds! You could inject every known disease into Smith and he'd destroy them all, thrive on them!"

It was only a matter of hours until

other discoveries. It kept Rockwell sleepless, tossing at night, wondering, theorizing the titanic ideas over and over. For instance—

Hartley'd fed Smith so many cc's of blood-food every day of his illness until recently. **NONE OF THAT FOOD HAD EVER BEEN ELIMINATED.** All of it had been stored, not in bulk-fats, but in a perfectly abnormal solution, an x-liquid contained in high concentrate form in Smith's blood. An ounce of it would keep a man well fed for three days. This x-liquid circulated through the body until it was actually needed, when it was seized upon and used. More serviceable than fat. Much more!

Rockwell glowed with his discovery. Smith had enough x-liquid stored in him to last months and months more. Self-sustaining.

McGuire, when told, contemplated his paunch sadly.

"I wish I stored my food that way."

That wasn't all. Smith needed little air. What air he had he seemed to acquire by an osmotic process through his skin. And he used every molecule of it. No waste.

"And," finished Rockwell, "eventually Smith's heart might even take vacations from beating, entirely!"

"Then he'd be dead," said McGuire.

"To you and I, yes. To Smith—maybe. Just maybe. Think of it, McGuire. Collectively, in Smith, we have a self-purifying blood stream demanding no replenishment but an interior one for months, having little break-down and no elimination of wastes whatsoever because every molecule is utilized, self-evolving, and fatal to any and all microbic life. All this, and Hartley speaks of degeneration!"

still insisted that Smith was degenerating. Dangerous.

McGuire tossed his two cents in. "How do we know that this isn't some super-microscopic disease that annihilates all other bacteria while it works on its victim. After all—malarial fever is sometimes used surgically to cure syphilis; why not a new bacillus that conquers all?"

"Good point," said Rockwell. "But we're not sick, are we?"

"It may have to incubate in our bodies."

"A typical old-fashioned doctor's response. No matter what happens to a man, he's 'sick'—if he varies from the norm. That's your idea, Hartley," declared Rockwell, "not mine. Doctors aren't satisfied unless they diagnose and label each case. Well, I think that Smith's healthy; so damned healthy you're afraid of him."

"You're crazy," said McGuire.

"Maybe. But I don't think Smith needs medical interference. He's working out his own salvation. You believe he's degenerating. I say he's growing."

"Look at Smith's skin," complained McGuire.

"Sheep in wolf's clothing. Outside, the hard, brittle epidermis. Inside, ordered regrowth, change. Why? I'm on the verge of knowing. These changes inside Smith are so violent that they need a shell to protect their action. And as for you, Hartley, answer me truthfully, when you were young, were you afraid of insects, spiders, things like that?"

"Yes."

"There you are. A phobia. A phobia you use against Smith. That explains your distaste for Smith's change."

HARTLEY was irritated when he heard of the discoveries. But he

IN THE following weeks, Rockwell went back over Smith's life care-

fully. He visited the electronics lab where Smith had been employed and fallen ill. He probed the room where Smith had spent the first weeks of his 'illness' with Hartley in attendance. He examined the machinery there. Something about radiations . . .

While he was away from the sanitarium, Rockwell locked Smith tightly, and had McGuire guard the door in case Hartley got any unusual ideas.

The details of Smith's twenty-three years were simple. He had worked for five years in the electronics lab, experimenting. He had never been seriously sick in his life.

And as the days went by Rockwell took long walks in the dry-wash near the sanitarium, alone. It gave him time to think and solidify the incredible theory that was becoming a unit in his brain.

And one afternoon he paused by a night-blooming jasmine outside the sanitarium, reached up, smiling, and plucked a dark shining object off of a high branch. He looked at the dark shining object and tucked it in his pocket. Then he walked into the sanitarium.

He summoned McGuire in off the veranda. McGuire came. Hartley trailed behind, threatening, complaining. The three of them sat in the living quarters of the building.

Rockwell told them.

"Smith's not diseased. Germs can't live in him. He's *not* inhabited by ban-shees or weird monsters who've 'taken over' his body. I mention this to show I've left no stone untouched. I reject all normal diagnoses of Smith. I offer the most important, the most easily accepted possibility of—delayed hereditary mutation."

"Mutation?" McGuire's voice was funny.

Rockwell held up the shiny dark

object in the light.

"I found this on a bush in the garden. It'll illustrate my theory to perfection. After studying Smith's symptoms, examining his laboratory, and considering several of these—" he twirled the dark object in his fingers—"I'm certain. It's metamorphosis. It's regeneration, change, mutation AFTER birth. Here. Catch. This is Smith."

He tossed the object to Hartley. Hartley caught it.

"This is the chrysalis of a caterpillar," said Hartley.

Rockwell nodded. "Yes, it is."

"You don't mean to infer that Smith's a—*chrysalis*?"

"I'm positive of it," replied Rockwell.

ROCKWELL stood over Smith's body in the darkness of evening. Hartley and McGuire sat across the patient's room, quiet, listening. Rockwell touched Smith softly. "Suppose that there's more to life than just being born, living seventy years, and dying. Suppose there's one more great step up in man's existence, and Smith has been the first of us to make that step.

"Looking at a caterpillar, we see what we consider a static object. But it changes to a butterfly. Why? There are no final theories explaining it. It's progress, mainly. The pertinent thing is that a supposedly unchangeable object weaves itself into an intermediary object, wholly unrecognizable, a chrysalis, and emerges a butterfly. Outwardly the chrysalis looks dead. This is misdirection. Smith has misdirected us, you see. Outwardly, dead. Inwardly, fluids whirlpool, reconstruct, rush about with wild purpose. From grub to mosquito, from caterpillar to butterfly, from Smith to—?"

"Smith a *chrysalis*?" McGuire

laughed heavily.

"Yes."

"Humans don't work that way."

"Stop it, McGuire. This evolutionary step's too great for your comprehension. Examine this body and tell me anything else. Skin, eyes, breathing, blood flow. Weeks of assimilating food for his brittle hibernation. Why did he eat all that food, why did he need that x-liquid in his body except for his metamorphosis? And the cause of it all was—radiations. Hard radiations from Smith's laboratory equipment. Planned or accidental I don't know. It touched some part of his essential gene-structure, some part of the evolutionary structure of man that wasn't scheduled for working for thousands of years yet, perhaps."

"Do you think that some day all men—?"

"The maggot doesn't stay in the stagnant pond, the grub in the soil, or the caterpillar on a cabbage leaf. They change, spreading across space in waves.

"Smith's the answer to the problem 'What happens next for man, where do we go from here?' We're faced with the blank wall of the universe and the fatality of living in that universe and Man as he is today is not prepared to go against the universe. The least exertion tires man, over-work kills his heart, disease his body. Maybe Smith will be prepared to answer the philosophers' problem of life's purpose. Maybe he can give it new purpose.

"Why, we're just petty insects, all of us, fighting on a pin-head planet. Man isn't meant to remain here and be sick and small and weak, but he hasn't discovered the secret of the greater knowledge yet.

"But—change man. Build your perfect man. Your—your superman, if you like. Eliminate petty mentality,

give him complete physiological, neurological, psychological control of himself: give him clear, incisive channels of thought, give him an indefatigable blood-stream, a body that can go months without outside food, that can adjust to any climate anywhere and kill any disease. Release man from the shackles of flesh and flesh misery and then he's no longer a poor, petty little man afraid to dream because he knows his frail body stands between him and the fulfillment of dreams, then he's ready to wage war, the only war worth raging—the conflict of man reborn and the whole damned universe!"

BREATHLESS, voice hoarse, heart pounding, Rockwell tensed over Smith, placed his hands admiringly, firmly on the cold length of the chrysalis and shut his eyes. The power and drive and belief in Smith surged through him. He was right. He was right. He knew he was right. He opened his eyes and looked at McGuire and Hartley who were mere shadows in the dim shielded light of the room.

After a silence of several seconds, Hartley snuffed out his cigarette. "I don't believe that theory."

McGuire said, "How do you know Smith's not just a mess of jelly inside? Did you x-ray him?"

"I couldn't risk it, it might interfere with his change, like the sunlight did."

"So he's going to be a superman? What will he look like?"

"We'll wait and see."

"Do you think he can hear us talking about him now?"

"Whether or not he can, there's one thing certain—we're sharing a secret we weren't intended to know. Smith didn't plan on myself and McGuire entering the case. He had to make the most of it. But a superman doesn't like people to know about him. Hu-

mans have a nasty way of being envious, jealous and hateful. Smith knew he wouldn't be safe if found out. Maybe that explains your hatred, too, Hartley."

They all remained silent, listening. Nothing sounded. Rockwell's blood whispered in his temples, that was all. There was Smith, no longer Smith, a container labeled SMITH, its contents unknown.

"If what you say IS true," said Hartley, "then indeed we should destroy him. Think of the power over the world he would have. And if it affects his brain as I think it will affect it—he'll try to kill us when he escapes because we are the only ones who know about him. He'll hate us for prying."

Rockwell said it easily. "I'm not afraid."

Hartley remained silent. His breathing was harsh and loud in the room.

Rockwell came around the table, gesturing.

"I think we'd better say good-night now, don't you?"

THE thin rain swallowed Hartley's car. Rockwell closed the door, instructed McGuire to sleep downstairs tonight on a cot fronting Smith's room, and then he walked upstairs to bed.

Undressing, he had time to conjure over all the unbelievable events of the passing weeks. A superman. Why not? Efficiency, strength—

He slipped into bed.

When. When does Smith emerge from his chrysalis? When?

The rain drizzled quietly on the roof of the sanitarium.

MCGUIRE lay in the middle of the sound of rain and the earthquake of thunder, slumbering on the cot, breathing heavy breaths. Somewhere, a door creaked, but McGuire breathed

on. Wind gusted down the hall. McGuire grunted and rolled over. A door closed softly and the wind ceased.

Footsteps tread softly on the deep carpeting. Slow footsteps, aware and alert and ready. Footsteps. McGuire blinked his eyes and opened them.

In the dim light a figure stood over him.

Upstairs, a single light in the hall thrust down a yellow shaft near McGuire's cot.

An odor of crushed insect filled the air. A hand moved. A voice started to speak.

McGuire screamed.

Because the hand that moved into the light was green.

Green.

"Smith!"

McGuire flung himself ponderously down the hall, yelling.

"He's walking! He can't walk, but he's walking!"

The door rammed open under McGuire's bulk. Wind and rain shrieked in around him and he was gone into the storm, babbling.

In the hall, the figure was motionless. Upstairs a door opened swiftly and Rockwell ran down the steps. The green hand moved back out of the light behind the figure's back.

"Who is it?" Rockwell paused halfway.

The figure stepped into the light.

Rockwell's eyes narrowed.

"Hartley! What are you doing back here?"

"Something happened," said Hartley. "You'd better get McGuire. He ran out in the rain babbling like a fool."

ROCKWELL kept his thoughts to himself. He searched Hartley swiftly with one glance and then ran down the hall and out into the cold wind.

"McGuire! McGuire, come back you idiot!"

The rain fell on Rockwell's body as he ran. He found McGuire about a hundred yards from the sanitarium, blubbering,

"Smith—Smith's walking . . ."

"Nonsense. Hartley came back, that's all."

"I saw a green hand. It moved."

"You dreamed."

"No. No." McGuire's face was flabby pale, with water on it. "I saw a green hand, believe me. Why did Hartley come back? He—"

At the mention of Hartley's name, full comprehension came smashing to Rockwell. Fear leaped through his mind, a mad blur of warning, a jagged edge of silent screaming for help.

"Hartley!"

Shoving McGuire abruptly aside, Rockwell twisted and leaped back toward the sanitarium, shouting. Into the hall, down the hall—

Smith's door was broken open.

Gun in hand, Hartley was in the center of the room. He turned at the noise of Rockwell's running. They both moved simultaneously. Hartley fired his gun and Rockwell pulled the light switch.

Darkness. Flame blew across the room, profiling Smith's rigid body like a flash photo. Rockwell jumped at the flame. Even as he jumped, shocked deep, realizing why Hartley had returned. In that instant before the lights blinked out Rockwell had a glimpse of Hartley's fingers.

They were a brittle mottled green.

Fists then. And Hartley collapsing as the lights came on, and McGuire, dripping wet at the door, shook out the words, "Is—is Smith killed?"

Smith wasn't harmed. The shot had passed over him.

"This damned fool, this damned

fool," cried Rockwell, standing over Hartley's numbed shape. "Greatest case in history and he tries to destroy it!"

Hartley came around, slowly. "I should've known. Smith warned you."

"Nonsense, he—" Rockwell stopped, amazed. Yes. That sudden premonition crashing into his mind. Yes. Then he glared at Hartley. "Upstairs with you. You're being locked in for the night. McGuire, you, too. So you can watch him."

McGuire croaked. "Hartley's hand. Look at it. It's green. It was Hartley in the hall—not Smith!"

Hartley stared at his fingers. "Pretty isn't it?" he said, bitterly. "I was in range of those radiations for a long time at the start of Smith's illness. I'm going to be a—creature—like Smith. It's been this way for several days. I kept it hidden. I tried not to say anything. Tonight, I couldn't stand it any longer, and I came back to destroy Smith for what he's done to me . . ."

A dry noise racked, dryly, splitting the air. The three of them froze.

Three tiny flakes of Smith's chrysalis flicked up and then spiraled down to the floor.

Instantly, Rockwell was to the table, and gaping.

"It's starting to crack. From the collar-bone V to the naval, a microscopic fissure! He'll be out of his chrysalis soon!"

McGuire's jaws trembled. "And then what?"

Hartley's words were bitter sharp. "We'll have a superman. Question: what does a superman look like? Answer: nobody knows."

Another crust of flakes crackled open.

McGuire shivered. "Will you try to talk to him?"

"Certainly."

"Since when do — butterflies — speak?"

"Oh, Good God, McGuire!"

WITH the two others securely imprisoned upstairs, Rockwell locked himself into Smith's room and bedded down on a cot, prepared to wait through the long wet night, watching, listening, thinking.

Watching the tiny flakes flicking off the crumbling skin of chrysalis as the Unknown within struggled quietly outward.

Just a few more hours to wait. The rain slid over the house, pattering. What WOULD Smith look like. A change in the ear-cups perhaps for greater hearing; extra eyes, maybe; a change in the skull structure, the facial set-up, the bones of the body, the placement of organs, the texture of skin, a million and one changes.

Rockwell grew tired and yet was afraid to sleep. Eyelids heavy, heavy. What if he was wrong? What if his theory was entirely disjointed? What if Smith was only so much moving jelly inside? What if Smith was mad, insane — so different that he'd be a worldmenace? No. No. Rockwell shook his head groggily. Smith was perfect. Perfect. There'd be no room for evil thought in Smith. Perfect.

The sanitarium was death quiet. The only noise was the faint crackle of chrysalis flakes skimming to the hard floor . . .

Rockwell slept. Sinking into the darkness that blotted out the room as dreams moved in upon him. Dreams in which Smith arose, walked in stiff parched gesticulations and Hartley, screaming wielded an ax, shining, again and again into the green armor of the creature and hacked it into liquid horror. Dreams in which McGuire ran

babbling through a rain of blood. Dreams in which —

Hot sunlight. Hot sunlight all over the room. It was morning. Rockwell rubbed his eyes, vaguely troubled by the fact that someone had raised the blinds. Someone had—he leaped! Sunlight! There was no way for the blinds to be up. They'd been down for weeks! He cried out.

The door was open. The sanitarium was silent. Hardly daring to turn his head, Rockwell glanced at the table. Smith should have been lying there.

He wasn't.

There was nothing but sunlight on the table. That—and a few remnants of shattered chrysalis. Remnants.

Brittle shards, a discarded profile cleft in two pieces, a shell segment that had been a thigh, a trace of arm, a splint of chest—these were the fractured remains of Smith!

SMITH was gone. Rockwell staggered to the table, crushed. Scrabbling like a child among the rattling papyrus of skin. Then he swung about, as if drunk and swayed out of the room, pounded up the stairs, shouting:

"Hartley! What did you do with him? Hartley! Did you think you could kill him, dispose of his body, and leave a few bits of shell behind to throw me off trail!"

The door to the room where McGuire and Hartley had slept was locked. Fumbling, Rockwell unlocked it. Both McGuire and Hartley were there.

"You're here," said Rockwell, dazed. "You weren't downstairs, then. Or did you unlock the door, come down, break in, kill Smith and—no, no."

"What's wrong?"

"Smith's gone! McGuire, did Hartley move out of this room?"

"Not all night."

"Then—there's only one explanation

—Smith emerged from his chrysalis and escaped during the night! I'll never see him, I'll never get to see him, damn it! What a fool I was to sleep!"

"That settles it!" declared Hartley. "The man's dangerous or he would have stayed and let us see him! God only knows what he is."

"We've got to search, then. He can't be far off. We've got to search then! Quick now, Hartley. McGuire!"

McGuire sat heavily down. "I won't budge. Let him find himself I've had enough."

Rockwell didn't wait to hear more. He went down stairs with Hartley close after him. McGuire puffed down a few moments later.

Rockwell moved wildly down the hall, halted at the wide windows that overlooked the desert and the mountains with morning shining over them. He squinted out, and wondered if there was any chance at all of finding Smith. The first super being. The first perhaps in a new long line. Rockwell sweated. Smith wouldn't leave without revealing himself to at least Rockwell. He couldn't leave. Or could he?

The kitchen door swung open, slowly.

A foot stepped through the door, followed by another. A hand lifted against the wall. Cigarette smoke moved from pursed lips.

"Somebody looking for me?"

Stunned, Rockwell turned. He saw the expression on Hartley's face, heard McGuire choke with surprise. The three of them spoke one word together, as if given their cue:

"Smith."

SMITH exhaled cigarette smoke. His face was red-pink as he had been sunburnt, his eyes were a glittering blue. He was barefoot and his nude body was attired in one of Rockwell's old robes.

"Would you mind telling me where I am? What have I been doing for the last three or four months? Is this a—hospital or isn't it?"

Dismay slammed Rockwell's mind, bard. He swallowed.

"Hello. I. That is— Don't you remember—anything?"

Smith displayed his fingertips. "I recall turning green, if that's what you mean. Beyond that—nothing." He raked his pink hand through his nut-brown hair with the vigor of a creature new-born and glad to breathe again.

Rockwell slumped back against the wall. He raised his hands, with shock, to his eyes, shook his head. Not believing what he saw he said, "What time did you come out of the chrysalis?"

"What time did I come out of—what?"

Rockwell took him down the hall to the next room, pointed to the table.

"I don't see what you mean," said Smith, frankly sincere. "I found myself standing in this room half an hour ago, stark naked."

"That's all?" said McGuire, hopefully. He seemed relieved.

Rockwell explained the origin of the chrysalis on the table.

Smith frowned. "That's ridiculous. Who ARE you?"

Rockwell introduced the others.

Smith scowled at Hartley. "When I first was sick you came, didn't you. I remember. At the radiations plant. But this is silly. What disease was it?"

Hartley's cheek-muscles were taut wire. "No disease. Don't YOU know anything about it?"

"I find myself with strange people in a strange sanitarium. I find myself naked in a room with a man sleeping on a cot. I walk around the sanitarium, hungry. I go to the kitchen, find food, eat, hear excited voices, and then am

accused of emerging from a chrysalis. What am I supposed to think? Thanks, by the way, for this robe, for food, and the cigarette I borrowed. I didn't want to wake you at first, Mr. Rockwell. I didn't know who you were and you looked dead tired."

"Oh, that's all right." Rockwell wouldn't let himself believe it. Everything was crumbling. With every word Smith spoke, his hopes were pulled apart like the crumpled chrysalis. "How do you feel?"

"Fine. Strong. Remarkable, when you consider how long I was under."

"Very remarkable," said Hartley.

"You can imagine how I felt when I saw the calendar. All those months—crack—gone. I wondered what in hell I'd been doing all that time."

"So have we."

McGuire laughed. "Oh, leave him alone, Hartley. Just because you hated him—"

"Hated?" Smith's brows went up. "Me? Why?"

"Here. This is why!" Hartley thrust his fingers out. "Your damned radiations. Night after night sitting by you in your laboratory. What can I do about it?"

"Hartley," warned Rockwell. "Sit down. Be quiet."

"I won't sit down and I won't be quiet! Are you both fooled by this imitation of a man, this pink fellow who's carrying on the greatest hoax in history? If you had any sense you'd destroy Smith before he escapes!"

ROCKWELL apologized for Hartley's outburst.

Smith shook his head. "No, let him talk. What's this about?"

"You know already!" shouted Hartley, angrily. "You've lain there for months, listening, planning. You can't

fool me. You've got Rockwell bluffed, disappointed. He expected you to be a superman. Maybe you are. But whatever you are, you're not Smith any more. Not any more. It's just another of your misdirections. We weren't supposed to know all about you, and world shouldn't know about you. You could kill us, easily, but you'd prefer to stay and convince us that you're normal. That's the best way. You could have escaped a few minutes ago, but that would have left the seeds of suspicion behind. Instead, you waited, to convince us that you're normal."

"He IS normal," complained McGuire.

"No he's not. His minds different. He's clever."

"Give him word association tests then," said McGuire.

"He's too clever for that, too."

"It's very simple, then. We take blood tests, listen to his heart and inject serums into him."

Smith looked dubious. "I feel like an experiment, but if you really want to. This is damn silly."

That shocked Hartley. He looked at Rockwell. "Get the hypos," he said.

Rockwell got the hypos, thinking. Now, maybe after all, Smith was a superman. His blood. That super-blood. It's ability to kill germs. His heart-beat. His breathing. Maybe Smith was a superman and didn't know it. Yes. Yes, maybe—

Rockwell drew blood from Smith and slid it under a microscope. His shoulders sagged. It was normal blood. When you dropped germs into it the germs took a normal length of time to die. The blood was no longer supergermicide. The x-liquid, too, was gone. Rockwell sighed miserably. Smith's temperature was normal. So

was his pulse. His sensory and nervous system responded according to rule.

"Well, that takes care of that," said Rockwell, softly.

Hartley sank into a chair, eyes widened, holding his head between bony fingers. He exhaled. "I'm sorry. I guess my—mind—it just imagined things. The months were so long. Night after night. I got obsessed, and afraid. I've made a fool out of myself. I'm sorry. I'm sorry." He stared at his green fingers. "But what about myself?"

Smith said, "I recovered. You'll recover, too, I guess. I can sympathize with you. But it wasn't bad . . . I don't really recall anything."

Hartley relaxed. "But—yes I guess you're right. I don't like the idea of my body getting hard, but it can't be helped. I'll be all right."

ROCKWELL was sick. The tremendous let-down was too much for him. The intense drive, the eagerness, the hunger and curiosity, the fire, had all sunk within him. So THIS was the man from the chrysalis? The same man who had gone in. All this waiting and wondering for nothing.

He gulped a breath of air, tried to steady his innermost, racing thoughts. Turmoil. This pink-cheeked, fresh-voiced man who sat before him smoking calmly, was no more than a man who had suffered some partial skin petrification, and whose glands had gone wild from radiation, but, nevertheless, just a man now and nothing more. Rockwell's mind, his overimaginative, fantastic mind had seized upon each facet of the illness and built it into a perfect organism of wishful thinking. Rockwell was deeply shocked, deeply stirred and disappointed.

The question of Smith's living without food, his pure blood, low tempera-

ture and the other evidences of superiority, were now fragments of a strange illness. An illness and nothing more. Something that was over down and gone and left nothing behind but brittle scraps on a sunlit table top. There'd be a chance to watch Hartley now, if his illness progressed, and report the new sickness to the medical world.

But Rockwell didn't care about illness. He cared about perfection. And that perfection had been split and ripped and torn and it was gone. His dream was gone. His super-creature was gone. He didn't care if the whole world went, hard, green, brittle-mad now.

Smith was shaking hands all around. "I'd better get back to Los Angeles. Important work for me to do at the plant. I have my old job waiting for me. Sorry I can't stay on. You understand."

"You should stay one and rest a few days, at least," said Rockwell. He hated to see the last wisp of his dream vanish."

"No thanks. I'll drop by your office in a week or so for another checkup, though, Doctor, if you like? I'll drop in every few weeks for the next year or so so you can check me, yes?"

"Yes. Yes, Smith. Do that, will you, please? I'd like to talk your illness over with you. You're lucky to be alive."

McGuire said, happily, "I'll drive you to L.A."

"Don't bother. I'll walk to Tujunga and get a cab. I want to walk. It's been so long, I want to see what it feels like."

Rockwell lent him an old pair of shoes, and old suit of clothes.

"Thanks, Doctor. I'll pay you what I owe you as soon as possible."

"You don't owe me a penny. It

was interesting."

"Well, goodbye, Doctor. Mr. McGuire. Hartley."

"Goodbye, Smith."

"Goodbye."

Smith walked down the path to the dry wash, which was already baked dry by the late afternoon sun. He walked easily and happily and whistled. I wish I could whistle now, thought Rockwell tiredly.

Smith turned once, waved to them, and then he strode up the hillside and went on over it toward the distant city.

Rockwell watched him go as a small child watches his favorite sand-castle eroded and annihilated by the waves of the sea. "I can't believe it," he said, over and over again. "I can't believe it. The whole thing's ending so soon, so abruptly for me. I'm dull and empty inside."

"Everything's looks ROSY to me!" chuckled McGuire happily.

Hartley stood in the sun. His green hands hung softly at his side and his white face was really relaxed for the first time in months, Rockwell realized. Hartley said, softly,

"I'll come out all right. I'll come out all right. Oh, thank God for that. Thank God for that. I won't be a monster. I

won't be anything but myself." He turned to Rockwell. "Just remember, remember, don't let them bury me by mistake. Don't let them bury me by mistake, thinking I'm dead. Remember that."

SMITH took the path across the dry wash and up the hill. It was late afternoon already and the sun had started to vanish behind blue hills. A few stars were visible. The odor of water, dust and distant orange-blossoms hung in the warm air.

Wind stirred. Smith took deep breaths of air. He walked.

Out of sight, away from the sanitarium, he paused and stood very still. He looked up at the sky.

Tossing away the cigarette he'd been smoking, he mashed it precisely under one heel. Then he straightened his well-shaped body, tossed his brown hair back, closed his eyes, swallowed, relaxed his fingers at his sides.

With nothing of effort, just a little murmur of sound, Smith lifted his body gently from the ground into the warm air.

He soared up quickly, quietly—and very soon he was lost among the stars as Smith headed for outer space . . .

THE END

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT!

SCIENTISTS have been telling us about how the Earth was formed; how it was thrown off by the sun (perhaps when another sun passed too close for comfort) and how it cooled down from a mass of incandescent gas to its present form.

But they can't prove it. It's just a THEORY. No matter how you argue it, it's just a theory.

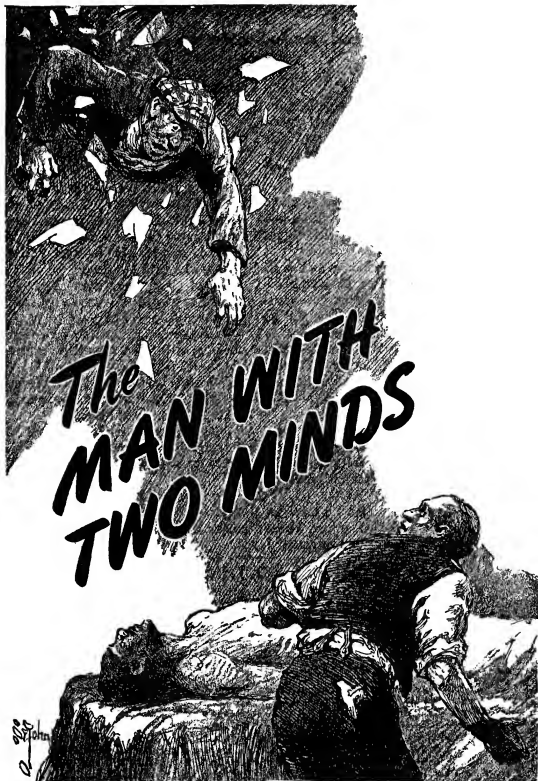
And, since one theory is as good as another, if you can't prove it, how about this one:

To cross you up, we'll try to put in a proof "plug" even before we start. So, did you ever see a "whirlwind" (on a barnyard scale) collect a little ball of dust at its center on a country road and deposit it in a heap? Of course you have. And you know how it was done, too. Anybody could understand that. The air, circling around in a

tightening "whirl," collected dust from the surrounding road and brought it to a "center" and then dropped it as it stopped whirling. But while it was whirling, this dust was in a little cloud which was densest at the center of the whirl.

Now, that is exactly what happens out in what science chooses to call the empty ether. And before you get the wrong idea of what we're about to say, let's give ether a "new" definition—let's say it is the "solvent of everything." In short, every element is in it in extremely divided form. Now, picture a "whirlwind" in that ether. The elements collect at the center. They form a sun. Smaller, attendant whirlpools in the ether form planets. There you have it—a solar system.

What caused the whirlpool, you ask? Ah, what caused anything? Don't toss that at thinkers!



There came the sudden startling crash of glass and Clubfoot Winkler fell . . .

By LEROY YERXA

WATER FRONT CHARLIE stood at the bar, his right elbow resting on it, huge hand grasping a dirty, half-filled beer glass. His head nodded back and forth like a man about to go to sleep on his feet. He wasn't drowsy, though. Through the sounds that filled the room, he heard two voices that held his attention. One, the guttural growl of a water-front bum, the other, educated but flat and emotionless.

Charlie tossed down the last of his beer and turned lazily, elbows behind him on the bar, right knee flexed with his foot on the rail. His broad, flat face turned red with a grin. His cheeks were covered with perspiration. He brushed a broad, flattened nose.

He studied the men at the table near him. One had a bewhiskered, wrinkled face. The man had been drinking too much. He was evidently excited.

"I'd like to get my hands on that guy's neck," he was saying. "How long does he think he can hide on the police. Rotten, low-life murderer."

The other man nodded. He held

up a white, very long fingered hand. His smile was disinterested, far away. Water Front Charlie could hear him clearly.

"Clubfoot Winkler's time is about up," he said. "They'll get him. He deserves it. The man's a filthy beast."

Water Front Charlie sighed. He was itching for a good argument. If it ended in a fight, so much the better. He studied the man who had just spoken. He was small and dried up looking. Evidently a product of some side-street apartment close to the water-front. His forehead was very high. Dark, narrow eyes peered from beneath heavy brows. His skin was pale and stretched taut like parchment. You couldn't guess his business. The black bow tie and dark coat might be worn by most anyone—artist—painter—crackpot writer.

The two of them talked for a while in low voices. Then the bum with the whiskers stood up.

"Be seeing you, Doc," he said.

So it was Doc, was it? Charlie's grin broadened. He crossed the floor toward the table with easy, cat-like

Waterfront Charlie just wanted to pick a fight, and this little guy looked meek enough—except for his eyes!



strides, jerked out the empty chair and turned it around. He sat astride it with elbows on the back, long legs under the table.

"Hello, Doc," he said easily.

The man looked up. The narrowed eyes closed completely for an instant, then opened to study him carefully. The man called Doc looked him over. His voice, when he spoke, was still flat, but it betrayed certain interest.

"I don't believe I've had the pleasure," he said slowly.

Charlie stretched and yawned. This was a good way to pass the time. Horn in on a guy's private life. Kid him along. If he got tough, pop him. With Charlie, they seldom got tough.

"I'm Water-Front Charlie," he said, indicating by the tone of his voice that the name carried certain power.

Doc nodded.

"So?" he asked.

"Oh—nothin'," Charlie admitted. "Heard you talking about Clubfoot Winkler escaping from the pen. You sounded real mad at Clubfoot."

The fire that flashed in Doc's eyes revealed deep, intense hatred.

"I'd like to see him burned in Hell," he said in a low voice. "He's filthy—beastly."

Charlie chuckled. He was enjoying himself. He had found Doc's weak spot.

"Oh—I dunno," he said casually. "Winkler ain't so bad. Used to know him down in 'Frisco. He always minded his own business."

Doc started to rise. His face had turned deep crimson.

"I don't care to discuss . . ."

WATER-FRONT CHARLIE came to his feet. His arm swept out and hit the little man hard—on the shoulder. Doc's words were cut off abruptly. He sank back into his chair. He was breathing hard. Charlie

watched him closely, waiting for trouble.

"Don't hurry away, Doc," he said. "I like to hear you talk."

The man stared at him.

"I don't understand," he said at last. "What object do you have in fighting with me? We have nothing in common, I'm certainly not your match."

Charlie just grinned. His flat nose, the coarse, dark skin of his face, reflected stubbornness. It amused him in a drunken way, to play with this mouse of a man.

"How come you hate Winkler?" he asked.

The Doc shrugged.

"Because he's against everything decent," he said. "He murders and tortures his victims. He went to the pen for strangling his wife and kids. You can't forgive a man for things like that. His mind is a cesspool. The lowest type of mind one can imagine."

"How come you know all that?" Charlie asked. "How come you know what's in Clubfoot Winkler's mind? Maybe he didn't get a fair deal. Maybe they framed him. The papers play up that junk in a big way."

The Doc was silent. He stared at the beefy ex-fighter. There was bewilderment in his eyes. Deep anger forced him to clench his fists. After a while he said thoughtfully:

"Suppose you had Winkler's conscious mind? Suppose you had your own subconscious mind, so that you could live inside of Winkler and see what goes on in that stagnant brain of his? I wonder if you would change your mind about him?"

His voice was soft and had a dreamy quality to it. He didn't seem to be looking at or talking to anyone in particular.

Charlie frowned.

"I don't get it," he confessed. He

bit his lip and decided that he didn't like the old goon very well. Somehow he felt as though Doc had dealt a blow below the waist. He didn't know *why* Doc worried him. For a moment he wished that he hadn't started making trouble with the old guy.

"You wouldn't," Doc said. "You're an overgrown, bullying lout. You haven't the brain to understand such matters."

He talked as though he wasn't afraid of Charlie any more. It was as though he sat alone, talking to himself. Water Front Charlie stood up slowly. He didn't feel like pushing Doc around any more. There was something in Doc's eyes that frightened him. Something dark and hateful.

"Forget it," he said, and turned away. "Forget it. I didn't mean nothing. Me, I'm always hornin' in where I ain't wanted."

At the bar, he wondered why he hadn't popped Doc for calling him names. He didn't feel like fighting any more. He could feel Doc's eyes, staring at his back as he ordered another beer.

"Damn him," he muttered.

He slopped the beer down, spilling it on his shirt. Doc's eyes made him feel prickly all over. He turned and tried to grin at the slight figure at the table.

"Be seeing you around," he said vaguely. He went toward the door, realizing that Doc hadn't answered—hadn't made a sign. He turned as he went out. Doc was coming. Suddenly a panic seized Charlie. *He knew, somehow, that for some reason Doc was coming after him.*

IT WAS warm and dark on First Street. He moved slowly along the sidewalk, threading his way among the water front bums. At the corner he

turned slowly, trying to show no interest in what was going on behind him. Doc was still coming.

He turned swiftly into an alley and started to run up the hill toward the center of town. Without looking back, he turned into the traffic on Second Street and tried to lose himself in the crowd. He walked two blocks, almost falling under the wheels of a turning truck. When he stopped again, he was panting—frightened.

Doc was still on his trail, a half-block behind, moving swiftly. Charlie stared about. Another alley led back down to First Street and into the dark district near the bay. He knew every fence—every corner down there. He had to get back—bide.

He turned and started to run down the hill into the pitch blackness of the alley.

He heard light footsteps behind him, coming closer.

Close to First Street, he stumbled and fell headlong, his head hitting a fence. Stars seemed to pop in his head. He tried to get up, stumbled and fell again. Someone knelt at his side. Through bleary eyes, he could see Doc's powerful black eyes staring into his.

"You're not so tough—now—are you?" Doc's voice was a whisper.

Charlie swore and threw up his arms, trying to ward off a blow. The power of those terrible eyes burned his head, made him throb with pain inside.

He felt paralyzed.

Hypnotized? Yes, that must be it. Doc's eyes seemed to bore into him with the burning power of two needles. They deadened his brain. The eyes grew larger, until he could see only the black, watery pools, larger—larger. Eyes that blotted out the world and concentrated unholy strength on him.

Then the eyes became pools of black water that rippled and faded away into

a pool of velvet darkness.

WATER-FRONT CHARLIE awakened with a dull headache. At first he wasn't sure what had happened. He didn't feel like himself. He was weak and—somehow—smaller. Someone had played a rotten trick on him. His face felt tight and the skin was stretched tight and dry over his bones. He was in bed, clad only in shorts. There was a cracked mirror and a green window shade that had been drawn tightly over the window. He swore aloud and even his voice sounded different—like someone else's voice.

He just wasn't himself.

He sat up, placed his feet on the floor and stared at them and the floor with groggy eyes. A chill went up his spine.

It was true. The feet were not his own.

They were smaller, and blue, heavy veins ran through them. The toes were dry and covered with sores. The right foot was misshapen and turned in at a crazy angle. *He was a clubfoot.*

Then he remembered Doc. The tavern. He remembered the flight, and last of alleys that grew so large that they swallowed up the world and fought their way into his brain. Eyes that hypnotized him and made him powerless to move. He struggled to his feet and by holding the edge of the bed, made his way to the mirror. He stared at the image in the glass and fell back, sinking to the bed, his hand over the ugly face he had seen. It wasn't Charlie he saw in the mirror.

It was the face of Clubfoot Winkler. He knew. He had seen Winkler's face in the paper—remembered him from the old days in Frisco.

The face in the mirror was old and wrinkled. The eyes were eyes of a murderer. Thick, ghastly lips curled

into a snarl, betrayed the love of killing.

Thoughts flooded back to Charlie. Like bits of broken film projected on a grey screen—twisting crazily through his brain.

Doc—the tavern—he had pretended to sympathize with Clubfoot Winkler. He didn't really like Winkler. He had worked Doc up to a frenzy just for the love of an argument. Doc had followed him. Doc was responsible for this terrible thing.

"Suppose you had Winkler's mind.—I wonder if you'd change your mind about him?"

Words ran through Charlie's mind—Doc's words.

He stood up and went to the window. He opened the curtain and stared down on First Street. He couldn't go out there. Couldn't go anywhere. He returned to the bed and found a pair of trousers, a torn shirt and a pair of brown shoes. They weren't his clothes but he put them on. He tried hard to remember every word of Doc's conversation. That was very necessary. He had to remember *all* of it.

WATER-FRONT CHARLIE didn't know much about brains—and minds. His life had been confined to drinking—and picking fights. Yet he knew that Doc's eyes had somehow done the very thing that Doc mentioned. He was in Winkler's body, but his own subconscious mind was observing every move that Winkler's body made. His own mind suffered because it was contained in the body of a brutal murderer.

His mind was in control now. Doc has said there were two minds. The conscious and the subconscious. When would Winkler's mind take over? He hated Winkler. Hated him for the terrible things that were made plain by Winkler's face. Feared what Winkler

might do, and what he, Charlie, might suffer.

Suddenly he stiffened. Someone was moving about in the hall. He was alert—ready.

A knock sounded on the door.

Panic sent him toward the sound. He was amazed at the animal reflex that made him want to protect himself. He would have to kill the person who came in. Like a cat, he was ready to spring. There was cunning in him now. Winkler's cunning. Passing the mirror, he knew that Winkler's face didn't frighten him this time. He seemed to be a man divided. Part of him was frightened—part of him was a filthy, polluted thing that *wanted to kill*.

He had to get out.

Another knock. He waited. The *someone* outside started to pound on the door. It sounded loud and hollow in the bare room.

"You gotta get out of here, Winkler," a voice said. "It ain't safe. The cops are closing in."

There was a terrible threat in that voice. He knew that whoever spoke might betray him. The door opened a crack. Charlie's hands—Winkler's hands—were opened wide, the fingers flexed. A man stood in the doorway. It was the whiskered hum who had been talking to Doc at the tavern. Charlie sprang at his throat, supple fingers closing about the dry, wrinkled skin. The man had yellow teeth that showed when he opened his mouth. He sank to the floor. His eyes were deep set and blue like pale flowers. They opened wide, pleaded for life, then stared at the ceiling without seeing it. They popped wide open and stayed that way.

Charlie had to get out fast now. He couldn't fight the cunning of Cluhfoot Winkler. He went stealthily along the hall and down a flight of dirty stairs to the street. It was night, and the

stairs ended in an alley close to the water-front. He went down the alley slowly, staying close to the wall. He had to find Doc.

With every ounce of concentration he could muster, he fought against Winkler. The mind of Water Front Charlie was powerful. It took command.

He had to plead for mercy with Doc. He waited in a hall-way across the street from the tavern where he had met Doc. He kept his head bowed so no one could see Winkler's face.

After a while Doc crossed the street on an angle and entered the tavern. Anger made Charlie forget that he was wearing the mask of a strangler. The face of a man that would bring death. He went across the street toward the lighted window. Before he realized what he had done, the light had betrayed him. Doc had been on guard. He heard the voice, shouting shrilly. Doc's voice.

"There's Cluhfoot Winkler out there. Get him, boys. There's money on his head."

The door was flung open violently. Men ran out into the street. From the shadows, hums, his old huddies, started to close in on him.

Charlie went wild. The murderer in him took over. He slipped a knife from his pocket and flipped open the blade. He faced the men, and left a wide, bloody trail from the tavern across the street and into the shadows of the alley. There the fight stopped. Three men lay in the street, moaning and holding the bloody slits left by the knife.

FOR two hours, the subconscious mind of Charlie failed to gain control. During that time, he wandered from one alley to another, trying to avoid the sounds of police sirens that

screamed through the night. Once, almost trapped, he crossed a roof and hid in an oil barrel in a junk yard. The cops searched for him there and failed to find him.

Slowly, fear brought back the power of his crazed mind. He knew that he had condemned himself by fighting with Doc.

He saw the unclean thing that was Clubfoot Winkler's body and mind. He knew that as Winkler he was capable of murder—even bappy when he was strangling or knifing a victim. He was frightened and miserable, and he needed Doc's help.

The subconscious mind must return to Doc. Would Doc give him back his body? He had no doubt of that. *He dared not doubt.* Faith was the one thing that kept him moving.

IT WAS after midnight. The murderer who was part Clubfoot Winkler, part Water-Front Charlie, waited for a little man who still sat in the tavern. The lights on First Street were yellow and murky through the fog. He felt safer in the fog. It closed in around him, hiding his face from the patrol cars that prowled along the street. They wouldn't suspect him of daring to come here again.

He stiffened when Doc came out into the fog and moved across the street. Only with the greatest struggle did he force the murderer in him to lie dormant. He wanted to strangle Doc, but he knew that he mustn't do that. Halfway up toward Second Street, Doc stopped and talked with the cops in a patrol car. Then he turned and went into a squat, brick-faced building. Charlie waited until the car pulled away. Then he followed. There was a sign above him, hidden in the fog. Doc evidently ran some kind of a business here, and lived in the rooms above.

Lights sprang on above Charlie, sending weird shafts of yellow into the fog.

He found a narrow alley that led to the rear.

He had to get to Doc's room.

The lower extension of a fire-escape hung a few feet above him, attached to the side of the building. He sprang into the air, caught the lower step and pulled it down. He went up the stairs on all fours, silently, like an animal.

It led him to the roof. He was in luck. His face was dry and very hot.

His face? No, the face of a murderer. He moved across the roof toward the wide skylight that sent brilliant white rays up from above. He kneeled and stared down through the glass.

The room below him was large—and very white. For a minute it blinded him. Then his eyes flickered wide with amazement. The room was equipped with stuff like he'd seen at City Hospital. Doc was wheeling a white cart into the center of it. Under the sheet he saw the outline of a man. Fascinated, the eyes of Winkler the murderer conveyed the message to Charlie's mind. Doc was pulling on rubber gloves. The sheet was drawn away from the lower part of the man on the table. Now the stomach was bare.

Charlie's hands gripped the edge of the skylight. He wanted to turn away but he couldn't. He wanted to break the skylight with his fist—to shout to Doc. He wanted to beg for his life.

He couldn't move.

Slowly his face went closer to the glass. His lips were drawn tight into a snarl, all trace of blood drained down his cheeks.

Doc was busy, working carefully with the certainty of a man who knows his job. Then the sheet started to slip from the table. It tumbled in a pile on the floor.

Water-Front Charlie didn't want to look at that face. More than anything in the world he wanted to avoid doing it. *He knew that the face of the man on the white table was his face. That the man on the table was he.*

There was a terrible struggle there on the roof. A struggle between a man who wanted to live, and the mind of Charlie who knew he must die.

The subconscious mind is all-powerful. With a hoarse scream, the man on the roof rose to his feet and plunged head first through the skylight.

THE cop at headquarters turned away from the phone. He had just finished saying:

"Sure—sure Doc. We'll be right over. You're okay, Doc."

He turned to the Desk Sergeant.

"Call out the death wagon," he said. "We got Clubfoot Winkler—deader than a herring."

The Desk Sergeant looked interested. He pressed a button that rang the garage and spoke over the inter-office communication system. Then he sat quietly, looking at the cop who answered the phone. He waited until the siren died away around a distant corner. Then he said:

"How'd they turn the trick?"

The cop grinned. He liked to talk.

"A guy named Doc, lives over near First Street," he said. "Winkler hid on Doc's roof and tried to get through the skylight. Slipped and fell, hit his head on a tile floor—fell ten feet. Finish for Winkler."

The Sergeant nodded. He was studying the program for the Yearly Police Show.

"Yeah," he said. "Too bad the department can't get credit for the kill. You say this guy's a doctor?"

The cop shook his head.

"Nope," he said. "The boys call him Doc. Just a habit. He's an undertaker."

The Sergeant's eyes lifted.

"Pretties up the stiff, huh?"

"Yeah," the cop said. "He had a corpse laid out on the table when Winkler took his dive. Embalming a bum who died in a First Street alley last night."

The Sergeant fanned his face with the police show program.

"Nasty business," he said. "I wonder how Winkler felt up there, looking down at a stiff?"

"I wouldn't know," the cop said. "I wouldn't think a nice, clean embalming job would turn Winkler's stomach."

THE END



WHAT MAKES IT HOT?



USUALLY the sun makes us hot. So, let's take that as our point of argument. Allowing the sun to be four and a half million miles in diameter, and giving it a break and saying it is composed of the very best grade diamond (diamonds burn, you know), we begin to arrive at something we can figure. Science can tell you how much heat energy is in a given amount of carbon which is released by burning. So let's assume (still giving the breaks) that the heat energy released by burning diamond is fifty percent of burning capacity, it would take about 80,000 years to completely burn up the sun.

There must be something wrong then with assuming that heat comes from the sun—we surely

must have run out of it long ago! Then what's that feeling we have on our bald spot when we go out on a sunny day? Heat! Sure as shooting, it's heat.

Then maybe it isn't heat coming from the sun, but heat that is induced right on our epidermis (and in the atmosphere surrounding it). But how? Well, we know one other way to make heat—by friction. What would cause the friction in this case? Could it be that light (having mass) rubs against the air and our skin as it comes from the sun and makes us hot—without losing any of its mass by burning?

Light particles are unbalanced atoms in motion, and the sun's atoms are numerous—very!



**Carbon is the basis
of human life; and here in the crypt
was a figure made of pure diamond—
could it be human; could it be alive?**

HEART OF LIGHT


By GARDNER F. FOX

HUBBARD unearthed the statue in a rubble of sand and masonry a thousand centuries old. He brushed it off and set it up in his tent amid the rest of his archaeological finds. And that night it spoke to him.

It was just after he had seated himself at his tiny desk to examine the odd, delicately carved vases and broken urns that had so piqued his curiosity that morning. Hubbard was an archae-

ologist, and an expert despite his thirty years. He had chosen this remote and unexplored section of the Australian desert land for his researches, hoping to unearth proof of the fabulously ancient land continent of Gondwanaland.

Already he felt certain of some measure of success, for these shards of bronze were ages old, worn with the passage of countless centuries. And with curve and angle and bas-relief so



There in the blackness of the crypt
there was a brilliant glow—and in it
... a woman lovely beyond compare

etched that his breath caught in his throat as he surveyed them.

But they were—strange!

He knew of no race whose carvings took such drastic tangents from recognized art forms. The things they depicted, too: this one, for instance, showed a space ship curving against the sky. Elongated and with a flaring tail that seemed to be rocket jets. Hubbard paused, startled. What is wrong with me? he thought. I'm letting these things get on my nerves. Spaceship? A meteor, rather, curving against the background that was speckled with stars. A meteor, he said to himself, and laughed.

"Laughter!" whispered a voice.

"Eh? What's that?"

Hubbard lifted his head and stared around him, into the gloomy corners, at the piled reliquaries whose shadows chased one another in the light of the flickering oil lamp on the desk. Nothing here. Probably his imagination; he'd been too long alone, out on these vast distances.

"Laughter. Human laughter, again. After all these eons, these untold eons of darkness. Someone did laugh?"

Hubbard stared at the statue, the skin prickling on his neck.

"I laughed," he answered slowly, curiosity beating back the nameless fear that pulsed against him. "I laughed at this—this has-relief I'm holding. You don't—mind?"

"Laugh again for me. Please! It is so long since I heard the sound of the human voice. So long . . ."

It was the statue. God!

Hubbard got up and eased the revolver in the holster at his side around in front of him. He unfastened the flap-catch, and wrapped his big brown hand around the butt. Holding the gun, he walked to the statue, bent to look closer.

It was lifesize, this bronze representation of some angular being that squatted as if with cold, long arms about bony knees, its small head staring upward. Funny, that. Hubbard scowled, remembering how he had carried it. For a statue of solid bronze, it had not weighed so much. Yet he was a strong man, over six feet in height. Perhaps he was even stronger than he thought.

He swore softly, staring at the eyes.

They looked back at him, unwinking: orbs of pure crystal!

"Can you see me?" he asked suddenly.

"I see you. You are—man! A thought—a thought had come to me that there were no more men. Are there other men, besides you?"

"Millions. I—but how can you speak? I didn't see your lips move at all."

"I am speaking with my mind. Many Ikorians can do that. I will tell you all about me, later."

Hubbard drew a deep breath. His great chest bulged the tan flannel shirt he wore. He rubbed his hands on his riding breeches, fighting his thoughts.

"Do you mean to tell me that you're—alive?"

"Alive? Of course I'm alive. That seems strange to you, naturally. It has been long since this shell of mine was—flesh. Come, help me. This wrapping about me, this bronze material—it was just sprayed on. It will rip off easily. Free me!"

HUBBARD found the thing spoke truth. The metal was thin, and crumbly with unguessable age. It came to pieces, like brittle candy, in his fingers. He tore it loose, dropping it in tiny shards at his feet. He worked swiftly, with powerful hands. The last bit of lacquer fluttered to the floor.

The statue moved; stood up, slowly

stretching.

It was a figure of gleaming crystal that stood before him. The lamplight glittered back from its polished surfaces, from the facets that gleamed and sparkled, casting off brilliant rays that nearly blinded.

Hubbard did not helive the credence of his eyes.

He opened them further, staring.

This man—this statue—this thing was made of—*diamonds!*

Little diamonds, big diamonds, all held together by some strange magnetic attraction: forming a human-shaped body on two legs, with two arms and an angular knob for a head. But this jewel-thing was exquisite! For Hubbard saw prisms within prisms, flawless squares and pointed pyramids, cones and cubes of solid diamonds, clusters of glittering jewels: multi-formed, bright with imprisoned reds and blues and vivid whites that gleamed and coruscated, pulsating with inner life!

The statue moved about the tent, examining everything curiously. It lifted bronze images and urns, setting them down as it had found them. Sadly, Hubbard thought.

The thing caught Hubbard staring at it.

"I amaze you. You are astounded. But—why?"

Hubbard laughed softly, rebuckling his holster strap. No use bullets against a being made of solid diamonds!

"I was thinking that body of yours as worth a powerful lot of money. It's as if a miser found a trunkload of his gold talking to him. After all—I did unbury you. Why, you're a walking Kimberly mine, and then some!"

"Ob. You mean this shell of mine is valuable to you. You could use it to get things you desire."

Hubbard chuckled.

"I could, but that doesn't bother me.

I have more money than I know what to do with. It's just the sheer, utter—fantasy!—of the thing."

He laughed, enjoying the nonsense of the situation. The statue listened, frozen; listened to his laughter, drinking it in as a musician might drink in melody after years of deafness.

It spoiled his laughter, that thing listening so. He scowled.

Thought seeped through his brain, searing it. God! I'm dreaming all this. I'm asleep over my desk, with one of those bronze pieces in my fingers. I'll wake up in a moment. It isn't real, isn't real. How can a statue speak? How can a man live, encased in—diamonds?

"I am real. After all, diamond is pure—how would you name it?"

HUBBARD felt his skin prickle, and the short hairs at the base of his neck rise in awe. Something was inside his brain, searching, exploring! Suddenly it released him, content.

"Yes. Carbon, pure carbon. And carbon is the stuff of life, the base of the living force in every living being."

Hubbard wiped his hands on his thighs.

"Who are you?" he almost snarled. He didn't like being treated like a laboratory guinea pig? "What are you? How in the name of all that's sane did you get—down there?" he nodded toward the dark hole of his excavation beyond the open flaps of his tent.

"My name is Tonal Tu. I am an Ikorian. I have been down in that dark hole for a long time. It must have been a long time. Let me see—"

The statue moved effortlessly to the tent opening: stood there, looking out over the vast waste of sand. After a while it lifted its head and stared at the stars. It made a brilliant image of countless colours and hues, reflected

rays of light, the tints locked inside the glittering prisms of its body softly pulsing.

Hubbard came and stood beside it.

"They are different, the stars. I do not know them at all. And the earth! That is different, too. I remember teeming jungles, and a vast ocean, and green grass waving where we built our city. All gone. Gone into the dead past!"

The image looked at Hubbard suddenly.

"The Heart! The Heart of Light—I had almost forgotten. Is he here? Did you find the Glitterer?"

Hubbard looked blank, but felt the strong anxiety, the powerful fear that gripped this queer being. It was as if it did not dare contemplate losing something that was worth existence itself to it.

"No," he answered slowly. "I found nothing but those bronze bits and—you."

"We must go below, into that hole you dug. If we could, we could find the Heart of Light. I must find him. He is—everything I need. He could tell you about me, and whence I came. He knows everything, is all-powerful!"

Hubbard turned back to the tent, took down an oil lamp and lighted it. He ran questing fingers about the cartridge belt at his waist, making sure the greased cylinders were there. He strode into the night, holding the lamp by his knees, casting radiance ahead of him. By his side walked the statue.

They crouched to enter the little tunnel under the earth that Hubbard had re-inforced with wooden beams brought for that purpose in his big plane. It stretched back for many yards, into darkness. Into the tunnel they walked, until they came to a blank wall of earth.

"This is as far as I went," explained Hubbard. "I found you here, with

those broken bits of metal scattered about. I think that at one time they held food and drink for you—in case you needed it."

THE statue paid him no heed, but looked instead at the bare brown earthen wall. As Hubbard watched, startled, that soil began to melt away into wisps of brownish matter that evaporated swiftly in the hot, dry air. It smacked of wizardry, seeing the ground being eaten away like that, but Hubbard was past the point of amazement. Dimly he thought of atomic power controlled by the electrical waves the brain emanates. A form of mental energy, poured by this jewel-thing into a force that ate its way through clumps of earth . . .

But he didn't think much, because at that moment the earthen wall was gone, and he was staring into a stygian gulf beyond. He crouched beside the statue on a shelf of rock that was part of a stone precipice bordering this abyss of eternal night. It was black, black out there: the utter ebon of solid darkness.

"I can't see a thing," muttered Hubbard, seeing the statue kneeling, and looking down. "Can you?"

"Quiet! I am casting my thoughts . . ."

Hubbard knelt silent, waiting. Furtively he loosened his revolver, taking no chances.

His breath caught in his throat—

A light flicked far below! It grew slowly, that light, glowing from somewhere far within that mighty jet emptiness. It shone dully at first, then grew brighter, blue and brilliant. It pulsed and quivered in bands of blue-white rays that billowed out from some hidden core hidden deep beneath them. It danced and beamed like a live thing, gaily swaying and beating, sentient.

Almost Hubbard could feel its—joy. And as that light grew brighter, Hubbard saw the white roofs and towers of a city, far below.

The statue stood erect on the lip of rock.

"Come. The Heart of Light still dwells in his temple. It is glad to see us. We must go to it!"

"That city," said Hubbard. "The sands of the desert should have covered it!"

Then he saw the dome of curving rocks above his head; rocks set flush to one another, forming a perfect hemisphere of solid stone that could have supported tremendous weight.

"The Ikorians built it long ago to protect their city from the mountains that were crumpling as this planet went through its maturing pangs!" the statue said, and took him by the hand.

It stepped out into the abyss, putting a foot on a ray of the queer bluish light that was reaching to their rocky foothold.

"The light will bear you," it said.

HUBBARD felt the amusement of the thing. It angered him, made him reckless. He stepped forward, felt solid matter beneath his feet, matter that bore him easily, without tremor. He stood on a beam of light that was shrinking, drawing back upon other curved beams of light that merged into it, and shrank in turn. It was an elevator of pure light! That, and more, for this light did not jerk and jump. It flowed smoothly and rhythmically, without a jar.

Down, down went the curved beam of light, to the floor of the great cavern.

Hubbard stepped out on smooth marble flagging that was strangely free of dust; looked about him, marveling. White stone buildings rose on all sides. Walls that curved, roofs that were per-

fect domes, towers that were needles of flawless granite glimmered ghostly in the blue radiance that bathed the city. It was an exquisite place. It filled the heart of an archaeologist, overflowed it with a lust to run from building to building, exploring, bunting, searching—

"I am very anxious to see the Heart of Light," said the statue, looking at him, and Hubbard followed obediently.

They came to a large square where stood a small, lovely white tower. Hubbard sucked in his breath in awe. It was a temple. It shone white in the blue light, a white so stunning it seemed translucent, like a white jade vase of the Ch'ien Lung period of Ch'ing dynasty China, that Hubbard had once seen in the summer palace in Peking. Great doors of carved gold were open, and on both sides of the doors square monoliths rose to glitter high above the square. From the opalescent dome of the building, around its perimeter, slim marble spears thrust their points.

"It's magnificent," Hubbard whispered.

"It is the shrine of Heart of Light."

Past the golden doors, up a curving flight of marble steps that shone beneath their feet strode Hubbard and the jewel-thing. Up past walls of a smooth coolness, to a level flooring—

"God!" whispered Hubbard.

A shining screen of opalescent hues and colors hung in midair, quivering and pulsing, alive. Within the lambent richness of its moving, restless chromatism were millions and millions of cones and cubes of moving jewels, weaving to and fro in eternal restlessness. Scarves of limpid tints flashed and glittered. Pencillings of light grew and richened within that living curtain, interwoven, living, threads of coloration. Motes of brilliant starlings sparkled and oscillated.

Hubbard heard a faint tinkling, as gems might make if cast into a tiny whirlpool; heard joyful peals, a tinnabulation of gay and laughing purlings . . .

"Tonal Tu!"

"Heart of Light. Master of Ikor, and the planets of Ikor!"

THE diamond statue leaped upward, was gathered within the living, pulsing, sparkling screen. The sussurating tinklings spun faster, more abandoned, louder, seeming to call forth blessings from its rhapsody of sound.

Hubbard froze.

No longer diamond statue, no longer being of radiant colors—

Instead a—*woman!*

Hubbard choked, awed. Tonal Tu stood naked in the quivering screen, smiling down at him. A woman was Tonal Tu, radiantly beautiful! Her rich red hair hung to her waist, her slant green eyes looked forth from long and curling lashes. Her mouth was scarlet, full and moist. Her body was pearly, creamy; touched with crimson.

She hung suspended in the living curtain, gazing down at him. She laughed, and Hubbard heard rich music.

"I too can—laugh!"

The screen pulsed suddenly, angrily. It seemed aware of Hubbard for the first time. It looked down upon him, questioningly; stretched out tendrils of light to his face. The light entered into his brain, probed it clean, as Tonal Tu had probed.

Hubbard quivered with the forces that were within him. Alien they were, and strong. Oh, so strong—godlike. They searched his soul as he stood there, not daring to move. He felt no rage. This—this being was beyond that.

The light released him, flowed back within the screen.

"Is this a being of outer Earth, daughter?" said the Heart. Its voice was filled with supernal majesty, deep, calmly powerful.

"Yes, Heart of Light. He found me above, in the bronze sheath you put me in, to escape the—*them!* He removed the sheath, and I brought him here. I had to find you, to learn—"

The curtain grew scarlet, raging. It threw sparks and showers of glowing crimson lights.

"Too late, too late. I was too late. I came, but not in time, O my handmaiden. *They* had come, and when they went away, there were none left. None!"

Hubbard was aware that the Light knew a profound sorrow. It beat against him, and tinted the hues of the screen a pale purple.

"All those who came from Ikor to find shelter here—gone in a way I tremble to think of. Taken by them who dwell in the black pits so very far below."

The Heart grew red, deep crimson. It billowed and surged and rippled. The music of its billions of gems was fiery, hating, ired!

"Ahh, but they have paid. Many have I slain in the eons I remained here, on guard. Many, many—but not enough! There are more. I must destroy them all—or seal forever their stenching pits."

Tonal Tu brushed back a strand of her red hair, smiling down at Hubbard.

"We could help you, Master—the Earth man and I."

Hubbard grinned suddenly. He was on familiar ground. He scented a fight. His hand touched the revolver, fell away. He felt the interest of the screen turning on him.

"The Earthman loves to fight, daughter. See how his hand brushes his weapon. He likes you, too, daughter."

HUBBARD caught the undertone of gentle amusement. He heard Tonal Tu gasp, and saw her cheeks flame red. He laughed aloud. He liked this Heart of Light.

"He likes me, too. Now that is a strange thing, for I have never sought the affections of these Earth beings. I have been too busy—slaying!"

Hubbard dared, and spoke.

"I sense the humanity in you, Heart. You are not human as I know humanity, but you do understand emotions: love, and sorrow, and hate. I would like to help, if I could. I could get more weapons. Machine-guns, grenades, rifles, poison gas—"

The Glitterer put forth a thin stream of light, touched a block of metal that stood in a corner. The light covered the block, flickering lightly over it, and was gone.

The metal block, too, was—gone!

"Have you weapons to match that, Earth being? Nay, fret not. I was but boasting. I can boast to no one, these days. And I always did enjoy a good boast. Still—I may use you yet. There may be a way.

"Leave me for a little while, you and Tonal Tu . . ."

The voice halted. Hubbard knew it had detected his thought. It laughed, shouted rich with mirth.

"Tonal Tu, he wants you as you are! Not with diamonds all over you, in you, part of you. He wants no statue, this man!"

The laughter again boomed forth, joyous; heedless of Tonal Tu's flush, of Hubbard's embarrassment. It was—no, not annoying, having your thoughts read by this Being. Say rather, pleasantly confusing.

"Oh, I'll let her go as she is, Hubbard. The diamonds you saw, the hard statue was *me*. My force, my essence all about her, shielding her from *them*. She

is young, Hubbard, younger than you. Only her mind is old, but that is because my mind was part of her mind, with her throughout her eon-long wait, comforting."

Hubbard wondered a moment, and the curtain spoke again.

"Then. You think of what they are, eh? You know. You have read of them. Certain writers of your upper crust: men like Lovecraft, Derleth—they came very close to guessing. How they imagined, I know not, but they—guessed! Eternal evil, dwelling just without the earth, under it, in the caverns of its seas . . .

"But enough—"

The Heart pushed Tonal Tu forth, wisped about her figure for an instant, hung about her a shimmering gown of light that hardened to a metallic cloth that hung close at hip and breast, and flowed down the shapeliness of her legs.

Tonal Tu stood beside Hubbard, gowned magnificently.

"Go now, and leave me with my thoughts. I must think on how we will entrap them."

HUBBARD took her hand in his, found it soft and white, tenderly smooth. Her green eyes stared back into his, and her crimson mouth quivered into a smile. They laughed, and started for the stairs.

The brilliant Heart of Light pulsed once, radiantly; then stilled, withdrew within itself.

On the flagging of the great square, Hubbard turned to the girl.

"What was he? How magnificent, how awesome!"

"He is the Heart of Light. He has always been. He came to my people on the planet Ikor ages ago, and dwelt among them. But I cannot explain him. He is light, and his jewels are the stuff of life, and contain the rich power

of color. Legend says he was born on a fiery sun, a sun that was—*intelligent!* He may be a part of that sun, a part that is endowed with life and motion. I do not know."

She smiled up at him as they walked. "Do you truly—like me, Hubbard?"

He grinned and pressed her arm, drew her close to him.

"I love you, Tonal Tu," he said slowly. "I've never been much of a man for the ladies. I don't know just how to put these things into words, but—I know I couldn't live without you."

"I'm glad. I—need you, too!"

"You are strange, different," he murmured. "You are alien in some ways. But when I saw you there in that shimmering screen—I knew."

They crossed the square together, wandering. Tonal Tu stopped suddenly, looking up at him.

"You would like to know about me, wouldn't you, Hubbard? About my people, the planet from which my race came to Earth. Come, I will show you, while he ponders—"

Hubbard laughed softly as they went forward. It was almost like going to meet his best girl's folks—only how utterly different! He was to see people dead before Cro-Magnon man bunted his first meal! Her people, his—his in-laws! He laughed, telling her. Tonal Tu laughed, and Hubbard knew she understood, somehow. It drew her closer.

They passed into a huge building, past open metal doors. Mightily instruments stood in the vast hallway as it stretched back away from them. Tall bronze engines that served some forgotten purpose, small ships carved from some rare red metal, knobbed and levered machines, wired things with copper discs caught Hubbard's eyes. They stretched along, row on row, fathomless, dead, relics of a majestic past.

"This is the museum of Ikora," said Tonal Tu. "Here my people placed various engines that they used in trade and war. I know not their use. Perhaps you can detect their purpose."

But Hubbard would not even hazard a guess. They were as utterly beyond his explanation as a description of a new color. He accepted them as they were, and was content. Tonal Tu drew him on.

THEY halted before a block of translucent metal that shimmered and gleamed with imprisoned lights. Tonal Tu stepped upon it, beckoned Hubbard to join her.

Light came pulsing up from the flat metal beneath their feet, came leaping in wisps and waves, flowing all about them. And where the light was—empty space! The room grew hazy, fading . . .

Now Hubbard saw figures all about him; saw men in stately halls and noble homes, men with worried frowns, with care and a bleak despair etched on their brows. Men of the planet Ikor of some ancient, distant galaxy, men who faced destruction from the cold that seeped on them from space as their thin girdle of atmosphere was slowly oozing forth.

The men and women gathered and spoke, and went together to a great white temple wherein dwelt the Heart of Light. Him they woke from his eternal slumberings, sought his aid. One way only was left to them: to transverse space itself to another planet. Only light could pass through the cosmic cold, yet the Heart was light itself! He could transfer them, a small part of their population. Their lot it was to pick and choose. He would find the planet, and bring them in his jewelled warmth across the void. Came the day when the men and women entered into

the Heart, merged into particles of light, small molecules of radiant glory, travelled interstellar space at tremendous speed. From his vast, fathomless power, the Heart fed them, warmed them, kept them in comatose hibernation.

They arrived on a young Earth where teeming jungles swelled with life, and heaving oceans battered craggy shores. Gigantic reptiles fought and mated on this planet. It was young: spawning, lush with tropic vegetation, alive with a strength that was indulging in its first experiments. Here would the people of Ikor grow and thrive!

They built their white city with the Heart of Light's aid. They walled out the too voracious dinosaurs. They lived and died here, amid new scenes, amid this fresh and glorious world. Here was new hope, new life. The Heart of Light went back to Ikor, to transplant others. Everything was perfect—

The blight struck!

Hubbard knew utter horror, seeing what came crawling up from beneath the earth that night. Oozing white stuff, with the look of the long buried dead: bulging strangely, fish-belly white, swollen in monstrous ways. Men went mad that night. Death and horror ran amok in this white city, as mankind fought and writhed and died horribly. Screams of agony and despair, of barren hopelessness, were the only sounds in the city.

When dawn came, there were not many left.

Those that remained were frozen with a nameless dread. They watched the sky for the Glitterer's return.

HE came at last, and with him more Ikorians. When he learned what had transpired, the Heart of Light raged, and gleamed with fiery crimson hues. He sought out the horrors, but they had powers, too—borrowed from

those outside, whom they served and worshipped with nameless rites and blasphemies. Not into their infernal pits could the Light go. He had to wait for them, and they were patient. So patient!

Among the first born on Earth was a little girl, a girl with red hair and dancing green eyes. Hubbard watched her grow, loving her even then. He saw the Heart of Light with her, speaking to her, teaching, instructing. She was beloved of the Heart of Light, his daughter.

When she was twenty, the Glitterer had to cross the void. The people on frozen Ikor needed him. But first he drew Tonal Tu within his brilliant colors, among his clashing jewels turning her body into light, and imprisoning that light within the diamonds that were part of his own essence. He coated her with bronze, and left her hidden.

That night the Heart of Light went back to Ikor.

That night *they* oozed up from below.

There were none left, then. Only—Tonal Tu!

The light faded, grew dim. Hubbard looked at the softly weeping girl; put his tanned arm about her, drew her close.

"The Heart of Light found Ikor a world of ice," she sobbed softly. "None lived on it! When he returned here, he found an empty city. He thought me gone, too. He vowed vengeance. He struck again and again as *they* came up: slaying, slaying.

"But death never brought life. My people—all gone!"

Her lips were close. Hubbard bent to kiss them, felt them quiver in response, felt her strain close—

Her eyes widened, filling with stark horror, staring past him. Hubbard dropped hand to gun, whirling—

They were here, in the museum!

They moved slowly across the marble floor: squat white masses of gelatinous flesh, with membranous tentacles stretching forth over the flagging, shifting, moving, dragging them forward, leaving a trail of slime behind. Long strands of cilia hung from their heaving, mottled masses; shreds of flabby flesh, limp and evil in the still air.

There were many of them. They came pulping in through door and window, flowing forward ceaselessly. From the pits they had come, drawn by the scent of humankind, exposing their flaccid bodies to the dim light—bodies that only eternal darkness could bear to look upon. From under drooping folds of flesh, reddened eyes glared forth. Eyes that were vacant and dull, eyes that gleamed with evil hunger, eyes that could madden—gloated upon their prey!

Tonal Tu shook against Hubbard. Her breath choked in her throat.

"They have come—before the Heart of Light was ready!"

HUBBARD swore and yanked his gun from its holster, fired. The bullets bit in, sank and lost themselves in that striated, rubbery white flesh. The things came on, unhurried.

"No use," whimpered Tonal Tu, shuddering. "We are cut off. The Heart is dreaming. He does not know."

Hubbard snarled low in his throat, caught the girl and lifted her high on his chest. He sprang upward from the translucent metal, reaching for a bronze lampchain. He caught it, drew himself and Tonal Tu upwards to hang for a moment.

"We can't fight them," he said savagely. "Bullets them seem to eat. But—but if that stone block is what I think it is—some substance indigenous to the Heart of Light, it will warn him

they are here! I think we saw his thoughts a while ago, transmitted through that metal that holds the lights."

But the white monstrosities shied from the metal block. They seemed to know, too. They could wait, for they were patient. The muscles of a man's arms will not bear his and another's weight on a bronze chain forever—even the muscles of a man like Hubbard.

Even so, there were some who would not wait. They went to the walls, began to slither up them, toward the ceiling, from which they could drop down along the chain—

Hubbard hooked a leg among the links, easing Tonal Tu over to one hip. He lifted his revolver and aimed it. It belched flame.

The bullet hit the block of shimmering metal.

It clanged aloud, and for one swift instant flared brilliant red, then grew dull and spiritless.

Hubbard grinned.

"He knows. He is awake. The bullet roused him!"

But the air did not grow bright with the radiant lights of the Heart. It remained dull, dim. Hubbard felt ice at his heart. Had he failed? Did the Heart still slumber on, pondering, thinking them safe?

Hubbard heard dull thunder. The walls of the building quivered almost imperceptibly. The chain swayed, swinging its human weights to and fro. The noise came slowly, muffled; and the earth, hearing it, quaked.

They heard it, too. Their flaccid feelers lifted to sway in puzzlement, curious, somewhat—fearful. They covered the whole floor now, a vast sea of pulpy flesh, dappled and noisome. They hung from the walls and the ceiling, clutching their smooth sides with their fetid tentacles.

"What—was—that?" whispered Tonal Tu, her green eyes wide and frightened.

"Sounded like an earthquake. But far away. Distant. It won't help us—"

THE mottled things were moving now, away from the building, out of it into the dead streets. They flowed swiftly, and Hubbard heard an alarmed chittering, a piercing squaking, as they called and shrilled to one another: questioning, curious. They seemed vaguely disturbed, as though aware of some terrible catastrophe. They went rapidly, scurrying . . .

"They can travel when they want to," muttered Hubbard, dropping to the floor and setting Tonal Tu on her feet. "Wonder what set them off?"

A moon window was pierced through the west wall of the museum. Hubbard and Tonal Tu went to stand there, staring out. The streets outside were white with the squamous horrors. From building-wall to building-wall they formed a great torrent of oozing, stenching flesh.

"There are thousands of them," he said. "They fill the entire city! They must have thought more Ikorians had come from space—"

"Hubbard! The temple! It glows, it brightens!"

The shrine was flaring with a mad potpourri of colored light that lifted from its transparent dome. The light surged upward, glaring crimson, angry red, raging scarlet. It blooded the city in vermillion, like a mad moon. Shot with white and green and yellow, that mighty red tongue of light danced in frenzy, rearing upward above the temple, filling the abyss above the city!

"They have seen the light. Listen!"

A babel of shrill titters and sobbing squeals rose from the massed ranks in the streets. It was sound, alive with

hleaak despair, a keening wail of hopelessness. The sound welled, grew in volume.

The things began to pour along the streets, seeking to escape.

"Hubbard, Hubbard," screamed Tonal Tu, pointing. "The harbor—where they emerged from their pits—gone!"

It was true. Where once the ships of the Ikorians had plied the young oceans of Earth, where the stone quays and wharfs jutted out, where had stood an ancient, blackened harbor filled with mud—was crumpled slag and cinders!

"He closed it while we thought he slept! Your bullet did arouse him. He knew. The light about the museum whispered to him. He went at once to their entrance in the harbor; sealed it, knowing they were with us, trapped above it!"

The Light was pulsing savagely, glowing red and enflamed, hovering over the city. It whispered its hate and vengeance in wild tinklings of clanging jewels, arrogant, boastful. It whispered of hate and death and utter extinction; whispered and—*struck!*

FROM the great screen of colors in the gulf above darted red flame—crimson light that spun downwards at terrific speed. It laved itself about the chittering white pulps that heaved and squirmed, bathing them in scarlet hues, roving over them, torturing with light, with the pure incandescence of a billion red lumens!

Hubbard and Tonal Tu watched from their window, awed.

Here and there sped the Light, devouring. Where it had been, was now black pools of liquid that bubbled once or twice, then seeped between the carcked flaggings to merge with the soil of earth. Like animate red hammers, the light poised and hit! And the white

things died by the hundreds, squealing.

How long they stood by the window, Hubbard will never know. But when it was over he sighed; and beside him Tonal Tu sighed also, sadly.

"He will not stay here now. There is no cause. He has trapped them, at last."

Hubbard held her close, wondering, saying, "But you—?"

A beam of light dipped toward them, gathered them up. It lifted them out of the window and toward the temple. Once again they stood before the Heart of Light.

"It was good, that slaying," the Light said. "I waited a long time for it. Now I am content."

"You, Hubbard—you are wondering what I am, from whence I draw my power. I am light, pure light. I am a tiny sun, in many respects. I am intelligent, and I have power. Yes, pure light has power! Your scientists know that, dimly. They have tested a beam of light in a vacuum, and found that it will move a strip of metal foil. That knowledge I drew from you."

"But your arts and sciences are so young, so undeveloped, Hubbard! Not far along the right paths have you humans progressed. Still—they will discover that light can nauseate, light can kill. Why is man the only mammal with a sense of color? For a reason—as they shall learn. Cold light is still a dream of your scientists; black light, but recently discovered."

"Yes, Hubbard, light is very powerful. It contains the stuff of life. It can cause an animal to breed twice where it only bred once before; it can make an animal grow its winter coat, though it be summer. It can effect seasonal changes in the wrong seasons! The life essence is—light!"

"If light can create, it can also—destroy!"

The curtain quivered, glittered, waxed boastful. It quieted.

"Come, Tonal Tu. My time grows short. I hunger for the cool stretches of space, out there among the stars. I want to see things, for I have been long a self-made prisoner, here in Ikora."

THE Heart of Light lifted Tonal Tu within its pulsing radiance, caressing, making joyful tinklings with its myriad jewels. It peered down at Hubbard.

"You will take her with you, Hubbard. I can tell that. Guard her well! For she will be no part of me this time. She will be a normal maid of Ikora, twenty years of age. You will have to teach, to educate her. But it should prove a pleasant tutelage."

The Heart cast Tonal Tu forth, placed her beside Hubbard.

"Go forth, my children. Go up to outer Earth. Raise strong children. In their veins will flow the ancient Ikorian blood. Perhaps their olden knowledge, too, will bloom. If you ever need me—"

A tendril of light flashed out, played over Tonal Tu's band: moving, forming metal, and placing diamond within it.

"Go . . ."

* * *

Hubbard calls her Toni today. He worships her, of course. Those of his friends who know her beauty find it exquisite, if slightly alien. But she and Hubbard keep to themselves, most of the time. They plan a trip back to Australia. They have a date, they say.

Toni Hubbard does not wear jewelry, except for a curiously wrought ring. It contains a large diamond. Lapidaries claim it is the most unusual gem they have ever studied. In it sparkles a tiny, bluish flame, alive.

They do not know, naturally.

It is the bridge to the Heart of Light.

TELEPATHY AND THE SILENCE

EVEN the scoffers at telepathy have occasionally experienced what they call "coincidentally" simultaneous thoughts shared with others. It is naturally foolish to consider these thoughts "proof" of telepathy. The real evidence showing telepathy to be a concrete phenomenon has been painfully accumulated by skeptical psychologists, and furnished abundantly by a few people who have enjoyed facility in the use of telepathic communication . . . men like Franz Polgar and Dunninger. Debunkers overlook evidence that is valuable, they refuse to admit much of it, and they cut off the legs of other evidence to make it serve their own argument.

Coinciding thoughts are a direct evidence that telepathy is a common human experience . . . lots commoner than is usually believed. The instances wherein man show the ability to employ telepathy consciously are rare. For the most part people have not developed conscious telepathic ability, so that when it is given fair intellectual consideration it enters the realm of belief. Only when the ability is brought into conscious use does it become reality or knowledge.

Modern man's mentality is filled with a succession of rapidly-modulating imagery, a vast flux of auditory or visualized words, and a continuously changing mood. Self-control of these things has been largely supplanted by the increasingly complex impact of whirling events. Very few people can literally quiet their own moods, or their own general mentalities. Even fewer can stop the succession of images and words of the consciousness so as to feel the silence. Thus the feelings and thoughts of others well up within and are not consciously distinguishable from one's own?

Pedantic science is currently being forced to the study of the deeper aspects of psychology by modern "pioneers" in mentalism. Or so it is thought by many. The truth is that the deeper aspects of mentality have been understood and employed by the most earnest seekers of self-knowledge for unguessable centuries. These seekers, known to others as mystics, have always placed equality of emotions and the reasoning process, as well as its strict control, before the other phases of mental development. Even among the true mystics there have probably been relatively few who have realized that perfect adjustment of thinking to emotion which results in the realization of "full being." Sometimes, though rarely, the conscious use of an occasional "latent" power may precede its thorough conscious realization. Be that as it may, the mixing of diseased mental or emotional patterns with life-control* is a practical impossibility.

* *Life-control Conscious Synchronisation of individual life with the environment.*

Before the consciousness can discriminate between original thought and thought of outside origin, it must A) be able to identify the vibrations of all the "sections" of its own mentality B) be able to modulate original vibrations so as to receive outside thought without interference and C) be able to maintain equanimity regardless of the nature of the received experience. *It is not necessary for the receiving mentality to understand in detailed fashion how it accomplishes these necessities*

It is quite apparent that the establishment of true equanimity and its maintenance can not be realized in a mentality which is managed by events instead of by itself. If personal integration is below the level necessary to the incontestably accurate classification of one's own experience, how may such a level of integration cope with the similar, but more difficult, problem of interpreting the state of another mentality? Only harmony within can enable one to appreciate harmony that is of the extra-mentality, whether it is the harmony of stars, atoms, personalities, or individual impulses and experience.

In the case of Franz Polgar, who completely lost both memory and speech as the result of being buried alive during the first War, and did not commence to recover these attributes for six months after he regained consciousness, there is a great lesson. Whereas his thought power (accompanying consciousness) was still functional, the mistaken clutter of experience accumulated from birth until the time of the accident was expunged. Like the mind of a new-born baby with the strength of the adult mind, Polgar's mentality diligently absorbed and classified *all* the experience available, both sensory and extra-sensory. The silence of a world without form and void lent hyper-sensitivity to the apprehension of the seen and the unseen. The result was a reintegration of mentality not subject to the mistaken, hand-me-down experiences of others (normally those of parents). Untroubled by terminology, imagery, superstition, faulty race beliefs, and the tempest of unleashed negative emotions, his mind was truly reborn!

The fixations, complexes, fears and inhibitions which make life a contemptible farce for the sea of humanity are the result of continuous negative suggestions adding emotional injury to mental insult "from the cradle to the grave." The line between hypnotism and suggestion is so fine that it would be difficult to maintain that most men are not spending their lives under the influence of negative hypnotics more deadly than all the other terrible afflictions.

When, Mankind, will ourselves begin, and the shadow-dance stop? John McCabe Moore.



Beneath the Yehusien Amazon's attack, the Hag's defenses weakened . . .

CULT OF THE WITCH QUEEN

(Continued from page 38)

WE ENTERED the deserted propulsion end of the ship. The driver-plate device never needed attention. Since these antique creations were perfection in craftsmanship, they didn't demand attention, so the crew seldom came here.

We had hardly entered the place when I heard a low whistle. I looked around but couldn't find the source of the sound, so I called, "C'mon out, Ceulna. This is my friend, Hank."

I heard her low, luscious laugh behind me, and turning, saw her emerge from a tool locker like a reviving mummy from a sarcophagus. Even the tool locker of one of those ancient marvel ships was decorated as beautifully as a Pharaoh's mummy-case.

"I've had the most wonderful time," she laughed. "Last night when I avoided the two sentries and came aboard, I came right here. I had heard the rays given off by this drive mech were beneficial—but no one told me it felt so good. I've been lying in stim for nearly twenty hours—no way to get away from it."

Still laughing gaily, she kissed me. "You look like a beautiful young God after all the stimulation I've had!" And she kissed me again laughing irresistibly. "I had no idea!"

I told her she looked like a beautiful young Goddess herself. I'd never seen such an improvement in anyone in such a short time. I was going to spend as much of my time aboard as possible getting the double stim of her presence and these rays she was talking about.

"I thought you were running away from danger—not eloping with Jimmy, here," Hank grinned at Ceulna.

"Ceulna, this is Hank Farne, my only friend aboard besides you," I introduced Hank to Ceulna.

"I'm always glad to meet a friend of the so Big Jeem," she said, giving her hand to Hank as Americans do, then kissing him on the forehead as the Venusians do.

"Hank has been on Venus for years," I said.

Ceulna, puzzled, looked at Hank, "Oh, then he knows our customs. I will give him our formal greeting or he will feel hurt."

Hank put up his hands protestingly, but she sank kneeling before him and embraced his knees in the ancient Greek fashion.

"It's a very pleasant custom," explained Hank, "once they greeted one another that way in many countries on Earth—long ago."

Hank seemed much taken with Ceulna. "But we must plan how to avoid your capture. You know how nasty it can be to fall into the hands of anyone connected with the followers of Hecate—the Hagmen!"

"Yes, I know—too well," answered Ceulna, her supple body shuddered all over. "I have seen some of their 'entertainments' of my poor people in my home city of Delphon."

"Just what is the difficulty in keeping her concealed?" I asked. "Can't she just stay here, quite comfortably, on the food we can bring her from our own meals? There seems to be plenty of it."

"Listen!" Hank hissed suddenly, for outside in the long companionway came the slow clump of a workman's boot. "At any time one of the officers or repairmen may come in here to get tools outa the locker or to inspect the generators, or to oil some part that's lost its ancient sealing."

The clump of those boots didn't stop, but grew louder and louder, finally halting outside the door behind which we stood immobile.

A GUN suddenly appeared in Farne's hand. I didn't have one, but I held up a restraining hand in front of Hank, making a gripping motion with my fingers. My paws are about twice the size of the average man's, and Hank got the meaning.

The latch grated, the door swung in. A blue-dimined figure started through, a large wrench in his hand. Quickly my own hands locked about his throat. A slight startled gurgle and he was soon quiet. I didn't care to kill him, but a look on Ceulna's beautiful terrified face tightened my grip the last destructive bit. I felt his windpipe crush—a convulsive shudder, and he went limp. Dead. The first man I had ever killed—but he wasn't the last. It's not a good feeling to kill, but it had to be done.

"What the H— ah . . . blazes are we gonna do with him, Hank. He's dead!"

"Oh, you huge beast, you . . . !" Ceulna's face blazed in sudden fury and revulsion toward me. "You didn't have to kill him. We could have hidden him somewhere—in a locker or something. He would have been found eventually!"

"I'm sorry, Ceulna. I was excited. I couldn't help it—he . . ."

It grieved me to have her look at me as if my hands were dripping blood.

"We'll get rid of him." Farne wasn't ruffled. "There is a space lock for refuse in several places."

Ceulna's anger and revulsion subsided, and she suggested, "We can put him out the drive tubes from this same room—there is an opening."

Getting an artistically decorated wrench, I went to work. Time had tightened the bolts pretty effectively, but at last the cover came off revealing an opening a little larger than necessary for a man's body. Everything the Ancients left is too large for mere man. They were men, if they were men, of huge size—that Ancient God Race.

"The drive flow is too strong!" cried Hank as a blast of force drove me back against the far wall, nearly stunning me. "We couldn't shove this carcass through that opening if there were a dozen of us!"

The field of force-flows sealed the opening more effectively than any metal plate. It formed gravitational vortices within the room; we swayed this way and that, or were thrown to the floor as though by a living opponent. We had to get that cover back on, even if we couldn't push the body through—but how?

After an hour of futile struggle, Hank solved the problem. He detached the great insulative nuts that held the cables from the generators. The great cable, as thick as a man's arm and heavy as Hell, was a job. Finally we lifted it off, and the tricky gravity flow, that buffeted us about the room, ceased. We shoved the dead stranger out the drive tube, replaced the plate and tightened the ancient bolts. What metal that stuff was! Old as I knew they were, there was only a fine grey corrosion to show it, less than an eighth of an inch loss in all those uncounted centuries.

I SPENT many hours of that trip in the drive chamber, for the radiations were

intensely stimulating, with a cumulative charge effect. After you were in there an hour, a glow of well being stole about your body, gradually increasing until you could not tear yourself away. Ceulna forgave me for the inadvertent killing—thanks to that influence which made the world seem a bed of roses.

All three of us were mighty worried about discovery, for we knew how these secret people habitually made mountains out of molehills to get a chance to punish somebody. However, nothing happened to further the chances of any mishap.

CHAPTER VI

Lo, take this herb of virtue, and go to the dwelling of Circe, twill keep from thy head the evil . . . Thy company yonder in the hall of Circe are penned in the guise of swine . . . in their deep lairs abiding.

The Odyssey

THE ancient hulk—its indestructible generators purring sweetly on the water that was their only fuel—settled slowly into the obscuring clouds of Venus. They must have been following some kind of radio beam, for we drifted out of the clouds directly over a vast cathedral-like structure rearing up from among the mighty, primeval trees. That this type of structure, huilt of rock from a foundation deep in the earth, was nearly unique on Venus, I didn't know. Nor did I know that the cult of Hecate, the Hag, whose headquarters were located there, were the descendants of the cult of the Limping Hag who had left Spain some five centuries before. These things I learned later. I had expected wonders from an alien race of a different development than our own. When the mighty ship settled lightly to earth outside a vast medieval pile, I was nonplussed at its strangely familiar appearance. The men who lowered the drawbridge came to meet us clothed in antique monkish robes such as are worn in some monasteries on Earth today. I turned to Hank.

"Say, what is this anyway. Venus or fourteenth century Spain?"

Farne smiled. "I was waiting for your reactions. These are people whose ancestors came to Venus just as we are coming now in the ancient ships from the secret caverns. They belong to a terrible and very ancient

cult—the cult of Hecate, also called the Limping Hag. It is a schism—an offshoot from the ancient Rosicrucians. The Rosicrucians are hardly more than a memory on earth today, but once they were a mighty and mysterious power on earth. When Hecate's followers perverted the science to evil ends, the Rosicrucians drove them out. It was at the time of the plague on earth, and fleeing simultaneously from the plague and the wrath of the mighty world organization at that time, they came here to Venus and so have remained. They have been a curse to the Venusians for their practices are cruel and terrible.

"The Hag, herself, is a kind of living Goddess, said to be immortal. She is the ruler here. Hecate is hated by the natives but they cannot drive her out. She is our ally in the war now going on."

SOME days later I stood with Farne in one of the great corridors of the church-like fortress. Through the dark, high-beamed rooms of the musty old stronghold moved a strange mixture of races. The descendants of the original Rosicrucian renegades were at times clothed in sober, all-enveloping monk's robes, and sometimes dressed like warriors of fourteenth century France or Spain. Guards in steel corselets with halberds held erect stood at the doors and passages. Past them went groups of the two-white Venusians of the northlands, fierce redmen from the hot equatorial belt, and green amphibians from the marshy islands of the sea cities. The green men, a species peculiar to Venus, were green skinned with gill slits in their necks, interior lungs as have ordinary men, webbed hands and wide-webbed feet. They had no noses to speak of, large staring, fixed eyes, and spines on their heads. The great black duckfooted men of the south lands were the most formidable in appearance. Huge muscled and gigantic of build, they had a dull stupid look, small eyes and flat heads. Through the ages of life in the swamplands of the south, they developed a tremendously wide foot. All were subjects of the cruel Hagmen, Farne explained. Most of them wore nothing but a few glittering baubles, the hothouse climate was not conducive to wearing clothing. Always their skin glistened with the cooling moisture they exuded. The smart uniforms of the recently arrived forces soon wilted, hanging damp-

ly on heat weary Earthmen. Yet they looked more efficient and capable than did the living relics of the past and some savage looking Venusians. But the white men of Venus, even though nude and flashing with barbaric ornaments, had a noble, cultured air superior to that of the Earthmen. They were taller, too, averaging well over six feet.

Ceulna had escaped into the jungle. We gave her a gun and several clips of cartridges before the ship landed. She intended to steal off the ship the first night after it landed. We thought it safer not to try helping her, though Farne wanted to accompany her. But it, would attract attention and pursuit if either of us were missing. Ceulna, herself, said, "You would only be a burden to me in the jungle. I can travel swiftly and easily through the high trees. You have seen me on the ropes of the 'Spider Dance'; these limbs are not so different. We Venusians inherit such ability. I will get in touch with you at the first opportunity. Please, please take off yourselves." She kissed us goodbye. Ceulna was gone, and with her most of the pleasure of life.

SINCE my arrival on Venus I had little time to learn the exact nature of the political setup between Hecate, the Hag, the native rulers who were our allies, and the invading forces of the Earthmen. Later this became clear to me. The men of Hecate, as well as the red, green, and black races, were minority groups on the planet, while the white race had always been the dominant force. Now the lower races and the recently arrived Earthmen joined forces to destroy the ancient white cities.

Harak, one stronghold of the Hagmen, lay sixty miles north of the tree city of Lefern. Lefern was a mighty city built in the gigantic trees of the forest. Hank told me about the first night I descended into the caverns. It was a powerful city of the Whites. I learned that Lefern was our first objective. It had been able to hold out against everything the Hagmen and the colored Venusian races directed. Now the shanghaied Earth forces were to be used to the last man if necessary to annihilate the Whites' stronghold. If the Earthmen succeeded, if we subdued Lefern, our value to the Venusians would be demonstrated, and our leaders would probably cash in plenty.

But if we didn't conquer the city, our position with the leaders of the Venusian aggressors would be decidedly minor.

Few Venusian roads were laid on the surface of the ground. Instead, they were strung between tree piers twenty or thirty feet above ground. These suspension bridges were made of the universal plastic substance in common use on Venus. It was light, strong, durable. Over this swaying transparent structure our trucks of supplies, the little one man ray tanks such as I was assigned to, our bigger six- and eight-man units, and our marching army of infantry moved toward Lefern—somewhere between six and eight thousand men, I guess.

On Venus it rains every night—most of the night, but the days are often clear. There is little wind, just the slow drifting of the grey mass overhead, the clear almost shadowless light, and the brilliant vegetation. The latter is full of pulsing life, growing, always growing; you can almost see it grow! The soil is seldom solid enough for any vehicle, but much of it can be walked on, if one knows where the firm places are.

About thirty miles from the city, in easy sight through our telescopic penetray-vision weapons, the bridge-road branched like the fingers of a hand, into dozens of smaller roads, all pointing toward different parts of the wide-spread city.

The city itself hung like festoons of giant cobwebs on the gigantic trees. Level over level, the cobwebs were hung with the many-colored and glittering globes of the Venusians' homes and shops. Of vari-colored plastic, these homes were of all sizes, suspended from the great web of the roadways or from the limbs of the trees themselves.

AS OUR engineers set to work on the cables of the road, strengthening them with ray resistant additional cables so they could not be burned from under our feet, we deployed on the two outer roads which ran at nearly right angles to a line directly into the city. The idea was to bring as many rays as possible to bear on it.

From the sparkling city came no sign that we were sighted. I swept a close focus over the vast system of webs which was Lefern and, except for an occasional tall warrior woman racing on some errand or

other, I could discern no life at all. Apparently the place had been evacuated. I noticed that many of the larger globe houses, which were factories or store-houses, were opaque to my vision beam. Heretofore, I had found nothing that obstructed its passage, so I was sure that these places were opaque by some device of the Venusian Whites. At my side Farne, who was equipped with a special long range vision device, spoke to me.

"This city of Lefern is a woman's city, ruled by Amazons. For three months in the spring of each year men are allowed to visit the city, the rest of the time no men are allowed within."

"Well, if that's all the opposition we'll have, this is going to be a pushover!"

"Don't be too sure, my optimistic young friend. Those ladies in there really can fight . . . and then some!" said Hank, obviously trying to caution me against losing my precious head, "and they are fighting" mad now. They're especially bitter against the men under Hecate, because these Amazons have a kind of religious veneration and love for children—as well as a mother's love—and they don't care for what the Hagmen do to kids."

My stomach turned over. Fighting women was not to my liking. But I knew it was fight or die for me. I had seen the fate of others who had objected to their forcible induction into the strange army. I did not care for any of their "deserter medicine."

At the order, we commenced firing on the city. The opaque globes resisted my disray, as well as the others' rays which rather astonished me, as nothing before had failed to disappear before it. The few Amazons who had been racing along the net of walks quickly disappeared—some shot down, some had ducked into the opaque buildings. Just when I was beginning to wonder why the city did not return our fire, and the webs of the city were beginning to be a tangle of cables cut by our rays, it happened.

A huge ray flashed out from the top of the center globe. It touched our bridgeways reinforced supports which our engineers had fondly imagined to have been made impervious to ray fire.

HERE and there it lanced, pausing a breath to burn through the cables,

then dancing on to the next support. The bridge-road began to sag, and before you could count ten, our whole army and its many tons of equipment was spread out on the soft muck of the earth below the road. At the same time billows of yellow gas arose from the ground ahead and began to roll steadily toward us. Behind the gas I could see the crisscrossing beams of the windmaking ray I had heard of, but had never seen in use before.² Scrambling about in the soft mud and the tangle of cut cables and equipment, we hurriedly donned our gas masks and awaited the worst, that is, those of us who had not been crushed under the fallen tonnage.

My little ray equipped tractor was sunk two feet in the muck which bubbled greedily as it sucked at the mass of equipment. Somehow, my heart rejoiced that these alien people were so well able to defend themselves. The gas rolled steadily closer. Would our masks prove as ineffective against their gas as our tactics had proven useless against theirs? Strangely, I hoped so, for those tall cool women in their jewel-like city that hung like a web of magic against the pearly sky of Venus, were not what I wished to destroy.

After I had gotten my gas mask in place, I secured my sinking weapon to a nearby tree trunk with a heavy vine. I had a great regard for those antique products of a lost science. I had not much time for thought before the gas cloud rolled over our struggling ranks and I learned that our masks too were futile against the Amazons. With a Hell-Fire in my nostrils, I passed out.

I AWOKE with a sharp intermittent pain in the rump. I put back one sleepy hand to encounter what seemed to be the toe of a boot. Looking around, I saw what appeared to be Ceulna, grown still taller and now covered all over with a strange tattoo.

I cried, "Ceulna, when did you get tattooed, and what the devil are you pointing that confounded pistol at me for?"

But Ceulna's double paid no attention to my words, only kicked me again in a spot

already sore. I got groggily to my feet. All about me a similar scene was being enacted in endless repetition.

The Amazons had followed in the wake of their anesthetizing gas and were making us captive. There was no fight in us. I didn't see anyone reach for a weapon. Somehow, I was glad, very glad I would not have to shoot any of these tall pink-and-white darlings. They were not made for that. I grinned at the woman warrior beside me. "You don't know how glad I am to see you."

She made no answer, only prodded me into line with that peculiarly deadly looking weapon she carried. Between a double line of the Amazons we started the long trek to the city. They wore mud shoes, a wide rounded board slipped over the boots, but we captives struggled along ankle deep in the muck, often falling when we hit a soft spot. A ripple of feminine laughter accompanied each fall. Somehow our mighty army was ridiculous. Remembering the bloody death sweats I had seen, such as the one of the girl on the cross the first night of my arrival in the caves not so very long ago, I blessed the fortune that had forestalled our attack.

Behind me Farne nudged my shoulder. He whispered, "This is something I've wanted and waited for ages. When I get the ear of one of their officers, we'll make out Okay."

Ahead of me another earth man spoke up. "I'd like to see old Hecate's hag-face right now. She'll probably bust a blood vessel and lose some of that baby blood she's full of."

Another voice remonstrated. "Aw, I don't believe all that stuff. Didn't you ever hear of war propaganda? They treated us pretty white. That show they put on for us the night we left Earth must have cost plenty. The grub was always good, too."

No one answered. The line slogged on in silence. Shortly we ascended a swinging ladder into the tree roads again. Here lines of long narrow vehicles waited, which explained the swift arrival of the Amazons. As we stood waiting to board the speedy looking buses, I examined the guarding warrior nearest me.

EXCEPT for the webbed hands and feet, they were almost identical to earth people. But their appearance was utterly

²This windmaking ray is described in the story "Thought Records of Lemuria" and was an essential part of most antique ray installations. Much of it was weather-controlling apparatus; they made winds, caused rain or dispersed rain clouds, and could throw lightning bolts.—Author.

different. Tall feather plumes on their head gear accentuated their height. My guard's clothing consisted of a G-string and weapon belt, arm bands of heavily jeweled and shining yellow metal, and knee-high boots of a gleaming stuff like woven metallic thread. Her skin was intricately tattooed with an all over pattern that even covered her face with lovely curving lines. The design was sea waves and flying long-necked birds. As I looked about at these tattooed skins I learned definitely that the beauty nature gives a woman can be immensely enhanced.

Later I learned that the tattoo was used as we use family names, the motifs indicating family ancestry. A heron over a sea wave meant one was the son of a woman of the Herons and a man from the sea tribes. A tiger stalking a deer indicated family connections with those tribes. On Venus they wore their family trees on their backs. But some modern city groups had dropped the tattoo as too barbaric. Ceulna had not been tattooed, I recalled.

One of the men near me, who had also been all eyes for the beautiful Amazon bodies, shouted in English, "Buddies, their mating season doesn't start 'til next month. We'll be the only men in the city. Talk about tough luck, this is terrible!"

One of the women seemed to understand English for she snickered and then repeated the man's remark in the Lefern Venusian language. The laughter rippled up and down the line until the sharp bark of an officer stopped it.

The glittering, jewel-hung mist-web that is a Venusian city in the distance soon became recognizable dwellings and streets as we flashed into the outskirts on our way to the center.

We did not have time to enjoy the beauties of the city and its feminine population. We were unloaded from the buses directly into a large and forbidding structure that ran all the way up the side of a tree almost to the low clouds. Many trees of Venus are large enough to have the tops hidden in the low clouds. This was a big one . . . I guess about the size of the Woolworth Building. I noticed that the weight counterbalanced the pull of a great suspension cable on the other side holding up the main street of the city.

Those delicious looking Amazons locked us up in cells and left us. I wonder how

many men felt as slighted by this neglect as I. A man's thoughts and emotions are so seldom logical. The days dragged by slowly.

CHAPTER VII

"I supplicate thee, O Queen, whether thou art a goddess or a mortal? . . . to Artemis, I liken thee, for beauty and stature and shapeliness."

The Odyssey

AT HER broad desk in the Intelligence Bureau Central Offices of Lefern, City of Tuon, Oanu, Chief of Secret Police, sat musing. The usually disciplined controlled lines of her face had relaxed except for a slight contraction of well shaped eyebrows. One long fingered, webbed hand kept pulling at her lower lip. The other, beautiful and white, idly drummed the polished top of the desk. Aimlessly, she pushed back the chair and with the grace of a serpent, stood up, her long metallic cloth cloak falling in heavy folds to the floor.

Six feet of efficient fighting machine—and gorgeous. She, too, was a warrior woman of Venus. And like most of the women of Venus—most of the white Tuons, she was beautiful and graceful. The long cape was the only covering she had, the jewelled straps and belts she wore weren't designed to conceal the well moulded figure—they functioned. Upon them were her shining insignia of rank and hooks and clasps for more of the strange weapons of Venus. A short bladed, damascened knife crossed the center of the girdle belt, and on the left side was holstered one of the deadly little hand gravity-beams of the jungle planet. Her plumed, ray-proof helmet was carelessly flung on her desk and her golden Tuon hair tumbled about her broad shoulders. Oanu lacked the leaner lines of the younger women, such as Ceulna, voluptuous rather than slim; still, she, too, carried herself like a skilled dancer, head held regally high, the movements of her hips fluid and the slow pace of her stride like the rippling muscles of a leopard.

Now, she seemed tired. With one hand she absently pushed a stray curl off her broad high forehead, then hooked her thumbs in the broad weapon belt. A few idle pats with her finger tips, and with just the faintest suggestion of a swagger, she strolled toward the broad window at the

side of her desk. Stopping in front of it she raised one tapering, delicately tattooed leg and planted a gracefully sandaled foot on a low seat.

Wistfully, she stood there watching a rainbow-plumed pair of Venusian lovebirds cavorting in the branches of the great tree. It was too bad, she thought, that the too rigid code of the Tuons forbade living with a man. It would be nice to be near a man always. The mating season was so very short—only three months, and if you found that you had fallen in love, it was hopeless. You must lose him forever, for the next year there would be another mate. The law forbade more than one child of a union . . . and, of course, the law was correct. It was a known fact that a race acquires strength by careful crossing of complementary traits. Yes, true, but it did spoil life so to lose one's mate every year. . . .

FROWNING, Oanu put aside her thoughts and pressed a button among the rows on the side of her desk.

"Bring those films that were taken by the telescopic camera of the Hag's city of Harak, as well as the films of the city they now call Disin," she barked into the orifice below the screen. "Also have the prisoner, Henry Farne, brought to me."

Oanu seated herself at the magnificent desk. An aide brought the films she ordered. The door opened the second time for a tall warrior guard and a prisoner. Henry Farne's dirty, bedraggled figure appeared more than ever the adult urchin as he entered the green dream of an office. He stood smartly at attention before the Intelligence Officer and flashed his most flattering and impish grin. Farne knew women; he knew that the boy in him would appeal to Oanu, the mother.

Oanu's eyes softened—almost twinkled—as she looked at him, and when her eyes relaxed like that, she was as beautiful as any dancing girl in this Tuon City. Suddenly, she snapped back to her role as Chief. The soft contours of her body tightened imperceptibly, those beautiful eyes hardened, and her inviting, voluptuous mouth contracted to a hard thin line.

"I have been informed, Earthman," said Oanu, her voice not at all pleasant, "that you have been in the service of these modern invaders from Earth for sometime, and also that you have been working for Hec-

ate. It is obvious from your long experience here that you know something of the conditions that exist on Venus which have brought on this conflict. How is it that you continue to serve them if you know their vile purpose?" She looked at Farne like a schoolma'm who's just caught a kid with a rat on a string.

"You would not ask if you knew the details of my record," Hank said in defense, however, not in fear of his examiner. "I have been lying in prison here on Venus for many years because my too open sympathy for your people aroused suspicion against me. A short time ago I was sent back to Earth. They figured I might be able to give the Earth leaders some valuable information about your organization. Now, I'm back here on Venus as a scout in their enlarging army, that is, what was their enlarging army."

"How many men did that last ship bring from Earth?" Oanu asked, a slight smile playing around her mouth. Hank's words had pleased her.

He realized she already knew the answer, but wanted to hear what he would say. "About two thousand men outside of the crew—all new recruits who have trained for about a month in the use of the antique weapons. You know, of course, that Earthmen are not accustomed to the antique mech. That is confined to a few sparse groups."

Oanu looked at him a long time. "You have a loyalty to these people who keep your own people in ignorance of the wonders of the ancient science?" she asked.

Hank grinned at her frankly. "None whatsoever, lovely lady. If I have any loyalty in my heart, it is for such women as you who have built a wonderful life for your people and who know how to fight to keep that life. But women like you are seldom able to trust such men as myself. You aren't clever liars, nor do you understand a liar and dissimulator like myself. I was raised in a very different school. My boyhood days were spent in criminal pursuits. All the dodges by which we live in such an environment are to you but cowardice and villainy. But I could be of service to you just because of my experience with the people whom you think of only to despise. It is one of your people's weaknesses, their inability to understand the criminal mind."

"Yes, that may be true," Oanu agreed. "There is a saying I have heard from Earthmen. 'Set a thief to catch a thief.' It is the thought that was in my mind when I sent you for." She picked up the cylinders her aide had brought her. "I sent for these films taken in the city of Harak from which you just came and in Disin and other cities under the Hag. My purpose is to arouse your sympathy and so loosen your tongue. You will find them interesting."

OANU raised a small projector from a recess in her desk, inserted a roll of film, and on the wall as the lights dimmed, a picture appeared.

Farne said, "Before you go on with the film, I suggest that you have the rest of the prisoners assembled and show them the nature of their ally, The Limping Hag. They are Americans like myself who have had the advantages of some moral education. I can assure you they are not savages. The secret ray group on earth have treated them very well, and they haven't the faintest idea what they are here to fight for, nor have they had a chance to refuse this service. Most of them would work for you gladly if you were to show them the truth."

Oanu liked the idea. She had expected to spend more time bringing Farne to realize a sense of duty toward the Tuon cause. She had not expected his smiling understanding of the rightness of the Tuon position.

With a quick affirmative nod, Oanu pushed a button and spoke into a silvery wire sphere, "Elpha, have the male prisoners brought to the assembly hall." Then beckoning to Hank to follow, she strode out through a circular door flanked by barbaric vases.

Soon, more than a thousand young Americans were assembled as Oanu had ordered. Like a mad dream, there they were, hundreds of modern American fellows, prisoners of a warrior race of women on a far planet, looking at scenes Earthmen hadn't seen publicly in six centuries.

The first image to appear on the huge circular screen was the medieval looking square in the fortress city of Harak, which they had just left in their attack on Lefern. The square was the market-place of the city, but no one traded there. They stood about a pyre of wood, staring at the figure that twisted its white face to God and back

to Hell again. Fantastic flowing smoke clouds swirled above the victim as flames licked hungrily at tortured white skin that turned black and ran with bursting veins of scorching blood. The stake was high. The people circled slowly to see the woman's form that writhed, surging against the chains that bound her. The flames grew higher; the woman twisted slower like a sick snake. Her lips were stretched apart and her teeth clamped whitely on a tongue that streamed with blood, her blood. As the flames blew this way and then back again with the fitful breeze, the people swayed in unison to see between the licks of fire. Black smoke rolled low and took shapes that beat against the brain with fearful meaning. Fluttering birds streamed by and wheeled, and flew back whence they came, sensing the black coils of fear that were in that place. The dogs sat on their haunches, their red tongues lolled out dripping slow saliva on the worn pavings at the smell of the cooking meat of the living woman. Some of the priests of Hecate's evil worship strolled by muttering, their beads clicked in their hands. They did not bother to look at the familiar scene of torture.

MORE and more of these horror pictures followed until we learned Hecate's worship was, in effect, the ancient Inquisition still functioning with its rack and stake, its needlers and iron-maidens.

The rich-cultured, low voice of Oanu kept up a running commentary of the scenes we looked upon. A good quarter of the globe of Venus was under the domination of the Hag's followers. Many once beautiful cities like Mersepolis were now wrecks, inhabited by misery.

Mersepolis hung among the great golden trees called Redgans for the scarlet blooms they bore. Once its vast web of walks and bridges had bustled with the laughing throng of native Venusians and its maidens had been famous all over Venus as the most beautiful of any city. Now Mersepolis had been in the hands of Hecate's men for thirty years, and no longer thronged these walks with life. There were only plodding workmen in rags. There were a great many children, but most of them were extremely pale and listless. The bright colors and the semi-nudity that was their custom had been forbidden. They now wore a kind of over-

all of blue and gray which was dress for the lower classes. Occasionally the black of the priests was seen, but rarely passed the gold and scarlet of the high priests, the inner circle of Hecate's empire. These were the blood-takers, the beings who lived on the blood of children.

Beside this city of Lefern, where the captive Americans watched the films depicting the cruelties and baseness of the Hagmen, there were twelve main cities on the continent which was the largest of the three large land bodies of Venus. Much of Venus is ocean, and much of the land is jungle. Of these twelve cities, Bruchion with its dazzling splendor, Rhacote, where the spires of the love-temples pierce the clouds, Panete, which was one huge building pierced by the trees that supported it and fronted by two rosy obelisks like great horns were of the Tuon race; all were Amazon cities and the most advanced culturally.

The three-towered city of Isis Phar had an inverted race of people living there of some strange culture—the men were like women and the women like muscular men. They were still free. The seven-columned city of Isis Loch was a neighbor of Isis Phar. Its people worshipped an ancient sea monster whose age no one knew. He was said to come in from the sea to answer their call.

There were seven cities in the south under kings—the kings were alleged to be immortal, but Oanu smiled as she explained them. These were called Alexan, Phys, Rhylat, Arsinoe, Delphon, Ekippe, and Nicosthene. And last, she showed scenes from Bubastison where the people are all one sex and could give birth by self-fertilization.

Of all these cities, only four had fallen to the Hag's intermittent warring, but over half of the land and the smaller communities had fallen to her warriors at some time in the past. These big cities, like Lefern had withstood all attempts to subdue them through the years, though one knew that they were always preparing for the next onslaught. Withal, it was a great land and rich and lush with life.

CENTURIES before, the Hag, with her evil crew, had come from Earth in the great and ancient spaceships, blasted out room for herself, and there sat in her for-

trass built by her slaves, brooding over the heauty of the world and hating it. From time to time she sent out warring expeditions, but this last one was growing into an attempt to subdue all of Venus. There were two reasons for this. The inner circle of blood-taking semi-immortals needed ever more and more children for their increasing demands as their number grew. And, there was an ever growing resentment of this same use of the children. This resentment had to be crushed before it became an organized power.

This was a bigger job than it would have been on Earth, for unlike the Earth people, the Venusians had known and learned to use the antique machinery of the God-race since the earliest times. Their science was a product of both their own work and the super science of the Ancients. On Earth only a few secret groups knew of the existence of the caverns and the weapons they contained. Since their science made the Venusians formidable antagonists, Hecate had contacted these Earth groups and was receiving men, supplies, weapons, and manufactured articles from them. In return she showed them how to delay old age by use of transfusions of children's blood.²

It was a disgusting, repulsive setup, and Farne realized that if Venus' free peoples fell, Earthmen would have no chance or hope of ever throwing off the evil leech that the secret ray groups would become with the Hag's methods of stealing children's youth. In time the Earth people would become what the Hag's people were, a slave population existing solely to support the priests and to furnish children whose blood would be used by the inner circles to prolong their horrible lives.

The hidden strong-hold, Disin, was the principal city of the followers of Hecate since the Hagmen came to Venus. The fortress City of Harak was the place our ship had landed. Under each of these cities, as under most of the cities of the ray-wise rulers, tunnels had been driven connecting them with the ancient cavern cities of the God-race and with each other. Bruchion, Panete, and Isis Phar of the inverted sexes had all fallen to the Hagmen

²Alexis Carrel in "Man the Unknown" says, "In medieval times the practice of transfusing young men's blood was widely spoken of and recommended."—Author.

recently. Isis Loch had just been reported captured. Lefern was the last place attacked and had surprised the Earth leaders with her able defense. But this was just the beginning of a long struggle for supremacy on Venus, Oanu well knew.

SOME scenes on the films were of the children farms kept by the inner circles of the Hecate cult. Those showed the chubby, well-fed infants of four and five years before they had been subjected to the blood transfer by the old members of the cult. Needles were inserted into the arms of these unfortunate children, then as a small pump drew the fresh, healthy blood from the child for the old man, his aged blood flowed into the child through a companion tube. The child remained hooked to the vampire for a month while the blood of each was exchanged for the other's. The child was allowed to eat his fill, but the vampire touched neither food nor drink during that period. The effect was miraculous for the old ones. Wrinkles almost disappeared, the flesh became firmer and the body began to grow in stature. At the same time the child rapidly showed signs of old age. Nor was the child released after one blood transfer. After several such sessions, his young body was allowed to recuperate and then was used again by the lesser priests.

This process of prolonging life had been brought to Venus from Earth early in the fourteenth century when the Rosicrucians drove out the Hagmen for their perverse use of the secret science. The practice had grown under Hecate, and now there were many men and women of the Hag's inner circle who were several centuries old.

So it was that a group of super-vampires, led by the Hag whose age no one knew, except that she had brought the original hand from Earth five centuries before, endangered all the children of Earth as well as the children of Venus. For the older and the bigger the vampires grew, the more children were required to keep them in health.

At the beginning of this practice on Venus, the children were returned to the neighborhood from which they were stolen. But it wasn't long before the Venusians realized just what these little old people who had been carefree, healthy children, meant to their race. When several attempts

were made to rescue the kidnaped children, the Hag doubled the guard on the baby farms, killed on sight anyone caught near them, and sentenced to death each child whose young body became so filled with the poison of age that they were no longer useful to the vampires.

One film showed the mother caverns. In great hospital-like rooms in hidden caverns, thousands of Venusian maidens were kept constantly pregnant, bearing more and more children for the baby farms. It was a revolting picture, this making cows of human beings, and the men from Earth who watched growled fiercely in their throats and clenched and unclenched their hands.

AS THE pictures of the baby farms unrolled before us, we saw the huge ogre-like body of the ancient witch out of the bloody past, Hecate, the Mother of Sin, strolling among the playing children, putting her mark of the Egyptian crossed circle with an electric branding iron on the arms of the rosiest and most active youngsters. Hot anger welled up in each man there. Hate flooded the assembly room. We wanted blood—Hecate's blood—her dying blood. We swore not to rest until the Hag was slain.

I wish I had sworn to stay several miles away from that same ogre-like body, for Hecate, the witch, still had a spell or two, but that came later.

Then came scenes showing the Hagmen burning the children who had reached the end of their usefulness as blood producers. These vampires found it more desirable to rid themselves of the prematurely aged youths and maidens, for their living presence was a perpetual reminder to the lower classes of the Hag's empire of the hideous nature of their rulers' parasitic life, feeding on the life blood of the people. So they were gathered together to a place called "The House of Life," so called to disguise its true purpose. Here they stayed for a short time, but daily dozens of them were taken into the cellars of the place and thrust living into a furnace. The furnace was a great iron statue of the God Moloch, whose worship the Hag had revived from her memories of Earth, to explain the burning of the children.

She taught that the ceremonial burning transported their souls to a children's heav-

en. The victimized people knew better, but they didn't dare talk openly against the thing, for the Hag was an old hand at getting rid of lowly opponents.

As we Earthmen saw more of the film unfold before our eyes, and realized what a horrible change the influx of the Hagmen brought to the beautiful life of these people, a thing surprising to Oanu happened. A chorus of cries arose: "Give us a chance, Amazons, let us fight for you against this thing."

The film stopped. The lights flashed on. Oanu stepped forward.

"Now you have seen the horrible system of life which you were blindly fighting for. For ages, on Earth, your own planet, such vampires have secretly existed unknown to you. It is one of the oldest and vilest practices of your Earth. We, the free white peoples of Venus, are the only force on the two planets who understand and fight this evil. Because of our knowledge of antique ray science, we are the only force that can fight against the Hag. If you want to cast your lot with us, and fight beside us for the future of your seed, for the future of all men against this destroying evil, you will be trained as our own soldiers are trained, and trusted until you prove unworthy of trust. If you choose not to fight for us, you face only the prison from which I summoned you."

The prisoners, Farne and I among them, rose as one man, shouting a Venusian word we had learned in the prison. "On! On!" The word was "yes" in Venusian.

So it was that the other prisoners, who had to a man chosen service under the Tuons, were trucked off to the military headquarters. At Farne's suggestion, Oanu kept him and me after the others had gone.

OANU was not a subtle person unless the occasion demanded it. She came to the point at once. Her voice was low and intense.

"We need spies. We have vast resources in man power, in the stores of antique weapons, as well as modern copies which we manufacture. But we need spies to tell us precisely what weapons the Hag intends to use. The study of these antique works is a very deep science. The Elder Race made many things for which we cannot discover the purpose. Some of these mysterious machines may well be weapons

and it can easily happen that the Hag, from her centuries of experience with the God-work, may know of weapons which would wipe us out completely. If she, herself, takes a real interest in the struggle and throws herself into the battle seriously, she may bring into use mightily destructive mechanisms which we will not be able to counter."

Farne glanced at me with a knowing look, and then grinned. I guess I did look pretty silly—this spy business was way over my head. Seeing Hank grinning, I tried to grin back, but I was puzzled—with all the stuff I had seen, why the necessity for spies?

As if in answer to my unspoken question, Oanu continued:

"We must have someone find out what weapons they intend using in the crucial struggles yet to come. We have spies, but we get little information from the inner circles, and that is what we must have. Certain marks from the weapons they prepare for battle must be in our hands before the battle is joined. If we guess wrong, we will have no counter. It is this lack of vital information that keeps us from attacking the Hag. We do not know, as you Earthmen say, what her 'ace in the hole' may be."

"Where do we come in?" queried Farne.

Oanu answered bluntly: "You, Hank Farne, are perhaps the only man on Venus really fitted to act as a spy on the last arrivals from Earth . . . and vice versa, you are the only one fitted to spy on us for your former masters. So to avoid the latter, I intend to use you for the former."

Ragged as he was, Hank looked like a real courtier when he bowed and assented to Oanu's remarks, whether with mock dignity or not, I didn't know, but it sounded good.

"Whatever I can do, My Lovely Chief, I will."

"You profess to admire us Tuon women much. You will risk your life daily in this service, and if you prove true to us, one or more of us will be your reward. You should find that highly attractive for we on Venus have developed the art of love with the use of the ancient stimulation electric."

"At your service," grinned Hank, his snags of teeth showing, his eyes twinkling devilishly. "I'll take the job, and by Jupiter, I'll come back for the reward, too."

The reward of being first on your list," he said meaningly.

Oanu smiled on him. "If it is really me whom you admire, it can be arranged. You will be first on my list if you succeed, I promise you. But, remember, we take a new mate every year."

"AREN'T you two forgetting me," I interrupted. "Though I can only wonder at what possible use I can be as a spy."

"We have ways of making you capable of getting information for us. We need only your consent. Of course, your value to us is enhanced if you are equipped with knowledge of our ways as is Farné. Our methods have little to do with your present ideas of what is the work of a spy."

"A spy spies, doesn't he?" I asked, a little flip.

"No, he doesn't," patiently, Oanu went on. "I will explain. To make a spy, we insert a tiny radio transmission apparatus in the skull. This is done in such a way that the apparatus is not noticed even under penetrative vision ray. Your own knowledge of its presence and function will be erased from your mind so thoroughly that even the most exhaustive examination by the telaug will not uncover the fact that it's there. The memory cells in your brain carrying those thoughts will be themselves destroyed in your head by our penetray surgeons. We have a minute needle ray for just that purpose. The wound it makes heals in a day; the memory is gone forever. By hypnotic conditioning, you will think yourself a supporter of Hecate. You see, a spy does not know he is a spy. But a spy is very easily controlled by us from a great distance, by virtue of the same mechanism which broadcasts his thought to us."

I turned to Farné. "I don't follow her, Hank. What does she mean?"

"See," answered Farné, "she equips us with an invisible walkie-talkie, unbeknownst to us. It tells everything we hear or see all the time over an individual wavelength. Then, the Tuon Intelligence listen to our individual broadcasts and guide us by mental control into situations where we can pick up info. For all of which we get a soft break when we fall into Tuon hands again, and their controls keep us out of trouble among the Hagmen."

Oanu smiled at this, nodding. "I'm glad you think that way. We can do it, al-

though the credit for the development of the wonderful piece of equipment that makes it possible, belongs to the Elder Ones. We found a few of them a long time ago in an ancient underground arsenal. Guessing that it was part of their war mech, we were finally able to divine its uses. I don't think they made very many, for there were only a few of them in the arsenal."

"WELL," I asked, "how does this thing work?"

"After we had discovered how, it was simple. All it is, is a miniature, ultra-powerful thought augmentor. With it, it is possible to control the spy completely—thoughts, emotions, and actions. But what makes it valuable is the way it augments the spy's thoughts and alters them so that they can't be read by an ordinary telaug. Through it, we can so control the spy that he is guided unconsciously into an advantageous position where what he sees and hears will be significant. By placing a large number of such robot spies throughout the Vampire outfit, every move the Hag makes will be known instantly here in Tuon Headquarters."

"Well, if it works the way you say it does," I spoke up, beginning to believe that she really knew what she was doing, "it certainly beats carrier pigeons!"

Oanu smiled condescendingly, then went on: "The 'spy-mech' is very much like those modern radios brought here to Venus by you Earthmen. Here, I'll show you one."

Walking to a far wall, she opened a small door and took something out. Coming back to where we stood, she extended her hand.

"Look," she said, "don't let the small size fool you. With this little thing we have the key to unlock the flood-gates of destruction on that detestable Hag and all her evil cohorts."

Neither Hank nor myself had ever seen the mech that she had been talking about so we both bent over to examine it.

"Why, that doesn't look like any radio," I protested, "that looks to me like a small half inch bit of flat bone or something."

"It looks like a piece of skull," Hank seconded.

"That is what it is supposed to look like," explained Oanu. "Notice the little jagged edges of the case—that is what looks like bone, the case. Well, those little jagged

edges are fitted into a similar opening that our surgeons make in the spy's skull."

"Say," I protested, "don't tell me that we'll have to run around with that thing in our skulls!"

"It isn't as bad as it sounds," Oanu explained. "We only do it with the spy's consent. After that is obtained, a very delicate operation will insert this apparent piece of bone into your skull; it almost entirely replaces the bony section it is designed to resemble. When it is in place in your head it will look still more like a piece of bone. But within that deceptive bone is some of the most powerful and complicated apparatus on all Venus. The case is of the same opacity as bone and nothing can be seen of its interior—not even a shadow, as the interior is made of materials transparent to the penetray, and their outlines are hidden by the shadow of the case.

I didn't see where any comment that I could make would do justice to the genius and skill that had made that originally, so I just nodded affirmatively, "Very clever, very clever."

"It is that," said Oanu, "and it is the only way that we know of that surveillance and intelligence work can be carried on where telaug rays read the minds continually and where the penetrays search every man for concealed weapons or enemy radio devices. There is practically no danger of discovery for nothing could possibly be noted except a slight portion of the skull which seems more opaque than the rest. And there is another advantage. The operations also splice certain nerve fibres fast to the receiver and transmitter so that your thoughts are instantly broadcast, and any commands given through the mech are immediately superimposed on your motor nerves. Thus, your actions can be completely controlled from this Intelligence center. And, too, we are able to protect you, whereas, we couldn't if you were free of any control. But, you will have to consent of your own free will."

"Well, if you say that is the way to lick the Hag," I said, "when do we start for surgery?"

"That goes for me, too," said Hank.

"Good! I thought that you both would agree to it—that's why I called you here to my office. You are going to become valuable operatives of our Intelligence,

eligible for the greater rewards that recompense services of this type."

Then, she impulsively reached out to shake hands with Hank and me . . . a Venusian Warrior woman shaking hands. That over, she planted a big kiss on Hank's surprised mouth.

CHAPTER VIII

*Now at the head of Hel's pale Host
Those livid armies of the lost
A giants, all shameless, strode . . .
For Baldr gleams the beaker bright,
His seat is set by Hela's side;
Eldvindr was Hela's hall,
Iron-barred, with massive wall;
Horrible that palace tall.*

*From "Valhalla,"
Julia Clinton Jones.*

OUR uniforms gained us entrance to the city of Disin. Without knowing just why, we asked to be taken to Hecate. (Farne surmised that sometime in the past she had taken the name of the ancient Goddess Hecate. Her undeniable great age would lend overwhelming support to the idea of her ignorant followers that in medieval times she was Hecate.) The guards before the great drawbridge accosted us in antique Spanish—Castilian, it sounded to me. We only repeated the name of Hecate over and over, and finally the guard called a comrade and sent us down the labyrinth of passages.

I found myself greatly excited. We might see the living antique who really could be the ancient, infamous goddess of evil. At this stage of the game, nothing seemed impossible to me.

As we approached the inner sanctum, the guard with us was challenged time after time by the steel-cuirassed inner guards. With a few words, they permitted us to pass. Presently we stood before a monkish figure, white-haired and falsely benign of face, a gold chain his only adornment relieving the severe brown sweep of the cowed robe.

The fellow questioned us in an archaic form of English—sounds and words in a language that hasn't been heard since Cromwell's time:

"Ye have escaped the Tuons? Mayhap ye can tell me how it happens that of all the gear and war-ray sent against that accursed city, but ye two ray are able to find

the path back?"

Farne spoke up quickly, probably fearing that I would put my foot in it, though neither of us really understood what had happened in the interval of time, as the memory had been obliterated from our minds by the Tuon medicos.

"When the cables were cut at the time of the attack, we fell from the road into a huge bush. Looking out, we saw the other soldiers being made captive by the Tuons. We were afraid to stir from our hiding place for fear we would be taken too. After the Amazons left, we climbed down. To avoid capture, we left the open road, and not knowing our way, we have been lost in the forest. Some natives found us, and although we could not talk to them, knowing only English, they brought us here."

After several more such questionings, Farne and I were taken through more chambers. We were on our way to the Hag. We noted that everyone referred to her as "Mighty Hecate," that is everyone who had any sort of position in the fortress. However, those that feared and hated her called her "La Hag." But few of the lower classes even knew she had another name, for the lower classes all hated her. But when in her presence it was surprising to hear the many voices calling her "Your Mightiness," "Hecate, Our Goddess," "O Glorious Fount of All Wisdom" and other outrageously flattering salutations.

We marched down several gloomy corridors. Torches placed midway on the stone walls for illumination cast strange moving shadows like the small lighted candles do in a darkened church. More fourteenth century geared soldiers guarded the passages. The monk's rustling habit and the clack, clack of our footsteps echoed and re-echoed. Finally, we halted before a massive iron-banded, oak-beamed door. At a command from the robed figure, guards flung open the door.

SHE lay within the chambering transparencies of some old vitalizer mech. It was a tremendous thing pouring a flood of rich, golden rays over her great body. The emanations of these rays, striking the eyes, gave the illusion of beauty even to the Hag's hideousities. I knew how unspeakably pleasant just a touch of those golden rays could be, and guessed at the vast flow of infinite pleasure which such a flood of

the potent gold must bring to the senses.

In spite of my better nature, my knowledge of the unutterable delight she controlled in the mysterious ancient stim machine made desirable the vast, brooding, terrible strength in that old, old body of hers. Vampire, she was, yet I felt a devouring interest in her. Like an unholy mass of putrid, pulpy flesh being born from a bud of a rose, something—something awful, and unclean—something in me rose horribly to destroy the last dying spark of decency in my brain—a brain that wasn't my own. I couldn't know it was the Tuon Intelligence women reading my mind and stimulating those thoughts to protect me from her savagery—and her unpleasant habit of killing whomever displeased her.

Now, Hecate was a sensitive reader of thoughts, her centuries of experience with the telang rays and thought augmentors had given her memory such complete data that she knew the thoughts most men think as children know the multiplication tables. Give her a facial expression and she could build up a man's thoughts by deduction quite accurately. Beside this, always on watch around her were several aides at the old thought augmentive beams, reading every thought of every person and looking constantly for every possible approach of danger or opposition. When anything interesting came up, it was their custom to throw a trans-telepathic beam into the great one's head. Seeing liking for Hecate rise in me in spite of my will, these unseen watchers connected me instantly with the ancient mind, for they thought it amusing that this big foreigner should actually register love for her.

Looking at Farne, she saw the fear and understanding he had for her. She saw, as well, the compliance toward her. This the Tuons had superimposed upon Farne's thoughts to protect him. Then her eyes returned to me, reading the strange emotion the Tuons had placed there. I knew she returned my interest from what happened. Perhaps the Tuons had not foreseen this or perhaps planned on it, though I did not think they could wish the secret upon which all their intelligence work depended placed so dangerously close to the Elder-wise eyes of the Hag. But they were unable to change the course of events without too much maneuvering. Tuon caution or their inscrutable purpose cost me my soul.

THE Hag questioned both of us sharply as to the nature of the Tuon attack upon the small Earth army. Learning that it was gas that accomplished our complete defeat, she dismissed Farne to the care of her intelligence men for complete questioning. She kept me standing before her while she lay on the transparent couch of the ancient vitalizer mech. Here began a horrible phase of my life.

Hecate, the unboly Mother of Sin, the Ancient Hag herself, was looking at me with her yellow eyes blazing. The others had left the room. Those yellow, feline eyes burned upon me for a long time. She lay there fingering the black hair that coiled weirdly over great, rock-gray shoulders.

Suddenly, from the bank of instruments and controls before her couch, she played a ray over me which caused an excess of inner energy to make every muscle of my body stand out quivering.

"So," her peculiarly accented English, coupled with her deep voice tones rolled persuasively from the depths of the splendor of the ancient wonder work about her, "you find the terrible Hecate attractive. How is it that so young a man can find attraction in this great, ugly body?"

Simultaneously, she played another ray upon me, causing an intensely pleasurable stimulation of every sense of my body. A fierce emotion horribly not my own, but one which ruled me, nonetheless, surged up into being within me. Or was it myself . . . aroused and impassioned with a consuming curiosity by the vampire lure of this witch woman—a thing often written of—written by writers who had never felt the terrible conquering power of the real aura itself? I did experience that power. No man's mere will can buck a dynamo. I succumbed.

"I don't know," I heard myself mumbling, "O Mighty Ruler of this land on a planet strange to me, why I should love you more than other women. But you can read the truth in my mind."

Now Hecate had many male sycophants and paramours who would have done anything she desired, many slaves to choose from, but some perverse whim in the dark labyrinth of her mind made her want me. And anyone who knows anything of the science of stimulative and nerve control electric knows that I didn't have a chance once that whim grew into a full-fledged desire. My great size, my ignorance of the

dark and evil life about me—what it was that intrigued her is hard to say.

I watched her huge form with eyes I could not turn away. Step by step I mounted the stairs under the flood of thickly golden rays, and erg by erg, the commanding pressure of mighty, overwhelming pleasure electric rose within my body. No man could have turned back from the ancient sugar coating of that bitter soul of evil. Then I stood beside her fascinated by those terrible yellow eyes that were neither human nor beast—like the faceted eyes of a female spider watching the approach of her mate, or the calculating, impersonal eyes of an octopus. All the untamed fierceness of such creatures lived in her eyes—their selfish will to live no matter what the cost to others—the ignorant soul of the she-tiger that eats her own cubs was in her character wholly. Those eyes, alive with the fire and the selfish wisdom of centuries of feeding on the young blood of children, burned into my own, hypnotically erasing every thought from my mind but the horrible joy that flowed through me and would flow more and more greatly if she so willed it. That synthetic joy—no less irresistible for being a product of a machine—flooded me, overpowering every natural impulse. Too, in my mind was the suggestion she put there, that through the prostration of my will to hers, lay the path to power as well as to strange, lost wisdom for me. I yielded—I failed—I lost myself in those strange arms.

SO it was that I became Hecate's thing, and stood behind her throne at the daily audiences of her ministers and her appointed rulers from the conquered cities. Always, I stood ready to her pleasure, and daily the clean, naturally good will in me died away, replaced by the insidious, inhuman electric of her control mech. Perhaps it was her doing and perhaps not, but the old mech placed an electric charge within me—in the tissues of my body which remained there like a new character. Daily the faraway Tuons heard through my mind what their ears were never meant to bear, and credited me with much valuable information on Hecate's plans.

As the time passed and my freedom became greater, I pieced together the facts and circumstances that had spawned Hecate. Some I overheard from lesser courtiers

—but most from the lips of the legendary Hecate herself.

Wise Mistress of the Ancient Wisdom—hellion goddess of abysmal evil and dissolution, she was 'Mighty Hecate' to her attendants; to the enslaved peoples under her heel she was the 'Limping Hag—the Mother of Sin.' The common, whipped people spat her name, 'The Hag'—but she was a filled-out hag, a human leech bulging with the blood of uncounted victims, and heavy for her size from the use of certain beneficial rays which were concentrates of certain vibrants from the gravitational flow. She explained later to me that much of her durability was due to this type of ray, that the blood transfers were supplemented by the rays. She obtained a vital and growth-promoting food supply from the veins of the young, but she obtained health and strength and the ability to absorb the blood of the young from the ancient integrative rays.

She had a deformity of one foot which gave her the limp that caused her to be known as the 'Limping Hag,' the devil's rival, partly because of the similarity to the devil which this foot imparted to her appearance. The foot was much smaller than the other. It seemed to lack the forward part, as though it had been lopped off about the center of the instep. On account of it, she looked more diabolical than nature intended, and it was easy to understand why to the common man she was the 'Limping Mother of Sin.'

TIME and unnatural growth had done strange things to Hecate. Centuries of indulgence of every kind had enlarged her lips; they were thick, full, and sensuous. Her smile was extremely wide and revealed oversized teeth like the fangs of a savage beast. Her nose, too, had grown out of proportion and was very long and sharply pointed. The burning yellow eyes and long black hair that just hung straight, uncured, the huge mouth and enormous nose made up a face so different from that of ordinary man, she looked like another being. Ugly, even hideous, she was, yes; but a fierce vitality and a ruthless kind of sense was in her, giving her a weird dignity. A fear-impairing face it was.

Her hands gave the impression of strength and dexterity far beyond normal humans; the fingers were extremely long and strong, the knuckles large. Her hands

could fly over the keyboard of an ancient force organ so fast that nothing but a blurred motion could be seen. It was when she was at work at one of these old mechs that her true witch-like character was apparent; her yellow eyes blazed intensely, wickedly, straight black hair swished and fanned out grotesquely on rock-gray shoulders. There was nothing of the decorative female in Hecate.

Yet there was a wild, savage attraction about this creature from the depths of the past. This living myth of ancient magic—she was alive. Evil had given her life—the betacorns of children who had perished that she might live—all the endless cruelty she had practiced and believed in for centuries as efficacious policies to power, all this hung about her as an aura that caused fear and revulsion—these two things caused a confusion in the mind of men who met Hecate face to face. One feared her, was revolted by her, but one came to her as a moth comes to the flame. As for me, she left me no choice. I was to serve her in any way she decided. I did.

By black, unholy arts, Hecate worked over my mind regularly, telling me she was improving its setup. Actually, I think she reduced to impotence those parts of my mind which made me independent of her will. Needle X-rays cut the connecting nerve tissues. In time, Hecate made me a reflection of her will. Without spoken words I was obedient automatically to every slightest wish of her mind, evil as it might be. Hecate had gained such control over my being that I was just another part of her body, an extension as obedient to her will as were her own fingers. But she did not know that at any time the tiny instrument the Tuons had placed invisibly in my skull could become my master, ruling me more thoroughly than she herself.

Why did the Tuons not cause me to kill her? Because there was no real chance; there were the watchers about her always, reading any alien thoughts. The Tuons bided their time.

THE months went by. The armies gathered and drilled. The tremendous war mech of the ancients was dragged from the caverns and mounted on great tractors. Another expedition, this time calculated to crush utterly any possible defense that might be prepared against us, was nearly

ready to launch against the beautiful city of Leferu of the Amazon Tuons.

Some part of me, the decent me, still lived on within my mind, helpless to the horror I was fast becoming, weakly shuddering at the daily tortured deaths of captives in which the Hagmen delighted and with which Hecate saw no reason to interfere, although I believed she was tired of such performances. This still living part of me was powerless to struggle against the evil that overwhelmed me.

I learned to handle the intricate pleasure ray apparatus, the stimulative and beneficial generators of an endlessly variant number of electric rays and energy flows; the whole myriad of involved apparatus which the ancients had left intact and indestructible behind them. I learned to handle all these things under the tutelage of the most experienced hand on two worlds—Hecate herself, who had had seven or eight centuries to learn the art of the ancient ray.

Always, of course, I practiced this art upon the body of Hecate, my new Queen . . . the unthinkable ancient art of stimulating—and feeding—the sensation nerves of a living body with electric flows from the antique, cave-held mechanisms. Somehow, through the ages of time, the Elder Race had learned to nurture and stimulate the human senses by using hydrogen ions bearing certain vital nutrients, carried by beneficial, ionizing electric flows.⁴

Accustomed as she had become to it in the long centuries, Hecate's giant body absorbed the floods of 'ben' like a dry sponge. She was the one that received—and she was the one that controlled—always. I practiced on the ancient mech with the Hag in complete control of my mind—I was but the tool of her will.

⁴From "A Bipolar Theory of Living Processes" by Geo. W. Crile, page 15, paragraph 3.—"[Hydrogen ions permeate all living organisms. The slightest change in the hydrogen ion concentration fundamentally alters the organism; and it is known that hydrogen ions are of high electrical significance.]"

Page 214, paragraph 2.—"In living organisms an acid alkali balance on opposite sides of the dielectric films (surrounding all cells) is maintained by a difference in the concentration of H- and OH-ions."

Page 46, paragraph 1.—"The constant oxidation of the lipid films of the globules would meet the hydrogen ion-electric potential requirements of the cell."—Author.

She conceived a sort of affection for me, and I found myself imbibing strange and potent fluids, even submitting to regular transfers of the baby blood into my veins without a murmur—the Elder Goddess of Evil Incarnate, Hecate, had removed the cause of any such murmur from my mind.

Her former favorites were, of course, wildly jealous of me or greatly relieved, whichever the case might be, but none of them could carry out any plans against me for fear of her anger. All knew Hecate's anger was usually fatal.

STROLLING beside the giantess with the evilly smiling face through the gardens of the baby farms became a regular part of my life—and not the most revolting part, by far. These walks we took had a sinister purpose—not the romantic thing that lovers feel—but the selection of child blood donors. This hideous life that I walked beside, selected the rosiest and healthiest children, placing her personal mark indelibly upon them for her future personal use.

This mark was done with a small electric branding iron. The seal of Hecate, a circled cross above a serpent, was burned deep into the child's flesh, and that child, from then on, was the personal property of the Limping Hag.

I was as oblivious to the children's howls of pain as I was to the screams of the men and women who daily died before her throne or in the grisly dungeons that underlay the whole stronghold of Disin. I was a man walking in my sleep.

In her gentler, more mellow moods, Hecate was wont to confide her plans to me, her ambitions and her memories of long, gone days. During one of these periods of relaxation, she said:

"You see, My Muscled One, long ago I was young and ambitious, an acolyte of the Rosicrucians. Well, I had a way with men, and some of the inner circle of the order were reputed to be immortal. I wanted that secret—that deeply-guarded secret. I schemed and planned . . . connived. I flattered, ogled the senior priests until at last my chance came.

"One day, they left me alone with the records and I found it, how it was done—this fighting age with young blood. I learned why it was secret, too. There is a great deal to know about this method of using

children's blood for one's own veins, drugs to add to the fluid to keep it from clotting and causing death. One must even learn why people grow old, in order to avoid the foods that cause age, learn how the sun causes age by throwing bits of its fiery self at us in the yellow light, learn how these bits of ever-fire gather in the body from the water and from the meat we eat. I studied how to prepare water free of the terrible poison from the sun and how to feed a child and take the child's blood into the veins instead of food into the mouth, so that the poisons gather in the child and the cleaned blood of the child brings food to one's body free of the cause of age. All these things I learned by giving myself to those old priests, by being pleasant and useful to them—keeping my mouth shut so that none of them ever got into trouble through me . . . or suspected my real purpose—stealing their greatest secrets for my own use.

"Since that time, many tired centuries have passed and I have learned more than any other living person." The unfathomable pits of Hecate's eyes seemed to focus in infinity. She shrugged.

"But I have become a horror and a plague to men, for I must have the blood of their children—and I will have it—for my plans are too great to be abandoned for any of their infantile emotions or virtues.

"I have learned by the study of their writings, how the Gods lived—the Elder Race who built these vast machines and endless caverns, and I have decided to follow in their footsteps."

At my startled glance, she nodded, smiling. "Yes, Tender One, I know where they went—I know why they went away from this accursed sun that makes a horrible blight of all the growth in life—the treacherous sun that lets men grow intelligent . . . only to die before they learn enough to become great.

"This life is but a faint dying echo of that mighty past. A little living reflection of a great fierce time when men were Gods, and the Gods living men, so heavy they sank ankle deep in the solid rock. Look at that machine."

OBEDIENTLY, I went over and examined the great ray-gen mech she indicated. There were many prints of feet in the rock, inches deep, overlapping. It

was true . . . the Hag was right! That solid granite was hut soft muck to the feet of those heavy men of the past.

"I've noticed these prints before about the caves," I said to Hecate. "You mean to tell me those men were so heavy they sank into solid rock as though it were soft clay?"

"Turn on that switch in front of the machine," Hecate directed, watching me with indulgent interest.

I reached out a besitant finger and pushed the lever down to its lowest mark. A hum came from the heart of the mysterious old mechanism. A strange force gripped me . . . stronger and stronger. My knees sagged with a great weight bearing down upon me, but, strangely, the presence of the weight was an exhilarating thing.

"That is the beneficial force which causes the world itself to grow. It is the force of gravity focused and refined into an integrative force which is now making every part of your body denser and much stronger," Hecate explained as the weight forced my legs into a greater crouch to bear the strain.

As she watched me, grinning her fierce, big-toothed smile, the heavy, penetrative, intensified gravitational ray made every bone in my body stand out distinctly. Like a man of glass, every organ and bone was outlined glowingly.

Suddenly, the Hag started and rushed toward me, a great fear on her face. She seized my head and looked closely at the back of it under the strong penetray.

"What is that dark hole in your head!" she shrieked, "What are those wires and metal I see inside?"

I disclaimed all knowledge of what she meant, which was not acting, for the Tuons had removed all trace of this mental apparatus insertion in my skull from my memory. After a close examination of the thing in my head, she called an aide—Enora—showed her the thing in my skull, and ordered her to find out just what it was and what data they might have on such a thing. Then, apparently dismissing the thing from her mind, she went on explaining her plans to me . . . for, now she meant to include me in those plans.

I LISTENED intently, for her mind was the oldest on two planets, sunk though it was in the sin of many lifetimes. Some-

thing of the girl that once had been so long ago—something of the good ambition that burns in all men seemed to burn fitfully within her, although in her continually recurring rages, every good she might do was wiped out.

This something . . . some of the primitive will to survival of the race, still lived in her . . . though it could accept the bleeding process that stole the lives of children to give itself life, accept the burning of these same children to bide the deed from the people, could not accept the idea of all that life used for no purpose.

She consoled herself with the thought that she would be equal someday to the ancient Gods whose work she knew so well and had puzzled over for so many centuries. This plan of power she talked about with me at times, though I was hardly a part of the conversations. She was so used to controlling those about her that automatically I made the answers she expected to hear without volition of my own. In truth, I was not myself at all, but only a reflection of her thought augmented by the great tubes of the telemach until her thought controlled me, unconsciously to us both.

She knew that in the early days of earth's history just after the two races of Gods had left earth and while the mechanisms of the cavern cities were still comparatively new, men had become practically immortal by the rays of the mech alone, without her device of blood-stealing from children. She had, in ancient forbidden records of the Rosicrucians, found accurate accounts of these first cities in the days of the latter Gods. Then, such cities as Asgard were numerous on earth, though the tales of Asgard are almost the only ones to survive. In these cities were conditions such as are described in the *Nibelunglied* . . . where the heroes of Valhalla could not be killed, but were put back together and healed under the beneficial rays of the healing palaces left by the God-race. She knew that these accounts were not legends, but were the truth.

In those far gone days, the secret rulers of the abandoned cities of the Gods sent their maidens out in flying craft to pick up the best of the dead bodies, for they were very human, even though long-lived. They pitied the dead, as well as had a vast need for fighting men in their own wars. The dead men were revived by the magic of the

ancient healing vital rays, and entertained regally, as the legends tell us, by all the devices the God-race had developed through ages of study of life. Such latter Gods as Odin, Wotan, Zeus, she knew to have been ordinary men who had used these vital rays to become virtually immortal. She suspected that they had studied the writings of the God-race and had gone in search of the Gods themselves to avoid the death—the death from the sun—the inevitable fate of all on Earth. This was her ambition, to follow in their footsteps and learn to search space.

TO DO that, she had to build an organization capable of searching every bit of the caverns for data on space travel and on the ancient ships, for those they used were fractious at high speeds, and the men who skippered them could neither repair them nor could they chart a straight course through space. They could only drive the old ships by the seat of their pants, by trial and error. Long as they had been using the old ships, for some six centuries and more, they had learned little about them. Space travel is a science which cannot be learned from modern science, but only from the very ancient records of the builders of the ships. And none existed who could truly read the ancient writing—the very concepts that fit the symbols they used are long dead on Earth and Venus. Trouble and wars with the peoples she despoiled for their children's blood ever kept her from her true desire—mastering the science of space travel and building ancient ships so that far space could be traveled at the high speeds the ancients had used.

This always sounded very big and noble . . . as though she were concerned with the progress of humanity. I am tempted at times to concede that occasionally she really and sincerely was the philanthropist that her talk would lead you to believe . . . though centuries of an unnatural existence doesn't make one so soft and loving. She lived on the raped blood of children, and the next moment talked of pursuing the gods for their secrets of eternal life for the people whose young blood she ravished.

Any woman is a mass of contradictions, but in Hecate all the contradictions had a bloody result. Her hands were bloody almost from the time she suckled at her

mother's breast, and rivers of thick, bubbly blood had followed in her wake from that day forward.

As the Mighty, Gory-handed Hag herself tells the tale . . . I think that she told it to those paramours who had preceded me . . . though where they were is hard to say. Dead, probably. She tells . . .

Of a sunny land bordering on the azure shore of the Mediterranean. A far off land on a far planet . . . far in space, and what man, save the Hag herself, can say how far in Time?

In a tiny village, there was born to a poor couple a child, their fourth, and the third girl. Much like any other child, her birth was not remarked, and she grew and played with her sisters. Her parents, as people in those days did, went on having children. The sun rode smiling across the blue bowl of heaven, day followed night. She was fourteen. Her sisters were a dozen, her brothers three. Their clothes were a simple woolen wrap, their feet bare, and their limbs long and brown and bare. Their only trouble was their stomachs which were never quite full. The fields were stony, they worked, but the food was never quite enough.

TODAY, is a holiday, the little town is full of the people from their homes in the near hills. A sheepskin or a wolf pelt is the men's attire, while the women wear short woollens in bright colors. They have flowers in their hair. The brown, strong children run and shout, the girls go by in groups, arm in arm, chattering shrilly, or racing across the grass in flight from the pursuing youths, who chase and catch them, rough their hair, dip them in the stream or roll them down the slopes. The games go on in the circle near the temple continually, short races, practice with the discus and javelins, mock battles. People come and go, watching the games—strolling through the village—talk and motion and laughter—brown clean limbs, curling hair, bright faces and shining teeth—the people of the tiny village are having a holiday.

The temple is old, but bright with this year's many colored paints on the frescoes and sculptured ornaments on the pediments and capitals. Flowering trees droop before the wide steps by the deep path. Men and women with solemn faces come and go reverently, bearing wreaths and food to the

Goddess. Before her dreaming, mysterious face, they bow to the floor, peering through the dimness at her polished form, and lying in imploring attitudes on smooth stones.

This day, Hecate did not race madly past the pillared doorway to meet the youths in the woods, but paused and looked long at the temple's dark coolness. Something drew her, and her white face with its twisted drooping lips that were too ripe, too red, and her yellow eyes that held those strange depths lit up by some hidden thought within her. She went in from the warm sun, into the coolness and stood looking at the pale limbs of the Goddess, at the pedestal of many sculptured breasts, at the figures that moved about the walls in a pale pictured life of their own. This reverence and worship awoke a rage within her. In contrast to the prostrate forms of the villagers, she stood erect with hands clenched and teeth grinding inaudibly as she gazed about. If she could, she would have toppled over the tall stone Goddess, kicked the offerings out the door, torn down the paintings. Why was she raging inside, she wondered. Why does this thing that filled the dark air with love and fragrance fill her with despair and hate?

A red mist came into her thinking, a shuddering over her limbs. She moaned in agony and ran from the temple, not stopping until she crouched alone in a thicket in the woods. A hunger was in her, her throat was dry, her palms burned. What would fill her, ever? The red fog that was her thinking grew thicker, her mouth dropped open, her white teeth ground together. She slunk through the woods like a dark-eyed and bloody-mouthed ghoul, hunger was in her and her red lips shone with drool. What this hunger was she did not know, but it drove her on.

A soft bleating came to her ears. She saw by a pool not far off, some sheep with their new young lambs. Stealthily, she approached, her body sinuously hugging the ground like a great cat, though there was no need, for the sheep, startled, galloped off in bawling flight. But under her lay a soft throbbing little body clutched in her arms, its stick-like legs thrashing at the grass. She bent the square little head back sharply. The great soft eyes rolled toward her in piteous terror and something in her exulted and feasted avidly upon the helpless fear.

IN HER hand was a little glass knife, a long silver, its handle wrapped with twine. Slowly she drew its shining edge across the woolly neck, quivering in ecstasy as the blood welled out and down her arm. She held the lamb's head tightly. The round, black eyes rolled madly. It struggled to bleat, but she held the mouth, it could only moan sickly in its throat. She bent and drank the hot blood, drank and drank until the hunger died away and her heart stopped throbbing against her ribs. The lamb was quite still; its little feet were limp and strained no longer.

She rose, left the still heap, and went to the pool and washed herself, combing her hair and making herself like other girls again. Then, she strolled back through the trees again, her eyes sleepy, her lips satiated, her body relaxed. The herdsman would think some fox or other creature killed the lamb.

Now the night lay sadly about her. Her sisters slept fitfully, arising often to drink, while her father soored a tiresome plaint into the dark. A hunger was in her again. It was days since she killed the lamb. A compulsion came into her veins, her palms were dry, her throat constricted. Her eyes burned into the blackness, but it turned back at her. Softly she crept, snakelike across the floor until the warm softness of her little sister's body was against her breast. In her hand she had the sharp piece of glass, a thread cutter from the spinning. The tiny one sighed a little, turned against her. Hecate parted the dark hair, baring the thin neck, and with the glass made a quick, deep slit. She filled her throat with the warm blood, holding the soft little head fiercely, her hand over the struggling mouth. After a long time, the body ceased its struggle, but she held it for the leisure of the stillness, and the sweet trickle down her throat. At last the hunger left her and she crawled back to her pallet and slept.

In her sleep she dreamed—dreamed of the good feel of a full stomach—the pleasant warmth of a cheery fire when the heavens outside are weeping. And other things she dreamed—of stars and planets—and strange peoples—and the dreams of never growing slow and wrinkled and old—a dream wherein she was a god.

Vampire spawn of Earth that she was, she could still talk of her God quest—and with supreme indifference he the cause of

torture and death. Torture and death with a motive. And her motive was always the immortality of Hecate, the Limping Hag. Nothing that went on in her fortress did so without her approbation.

ONCE, walking in some of the lower chambers, I idly paused to watch a fine-looking old gentleman being broken on the wheel. I had so sunk into my role of the Hag's favorite that the sight of agony and hideous death howls left me with only a slight thrill of pleasure. But, this day, for some reason I wondered at the cause of this man's being racked.

Nodding to one of the Earthmen members of the Hag's forces, I inquired as to the reason for it.

The answer was astounding when I grasped it . . . the still human part of me was astounded, I mean.

The Earthman looked at me strangely—my position as the Hag's favorite would indicate that I should know. He shrugged his shoulders, then said, "He was manufacturing a steel 'beam' on Earth and planning to sell it widely. A steel beam in their midst would detract from our ancient moral standing."

The Hagman laughed at his cryptic speech and walked off. I pondered awhile, then walked up to the man sweating in a death agony. He was an Earthman—a high type. An intellectual head he had, and long fingered hands. A beautiful specimen of the highest type of Earthman, though he was broken and bleeding now.

I knew that the antique rays was made of what was called the Elder Metal. That was what he had meant by "beams." I realized then what that secrecy cost the peoples of Earth in engineers and others . . . the secrecy of the ancient moch buried in the caves beneath our feet, though at the time I was too much under the Hag's influence to care. This man was evidently an engineer or a physicist who had been making a ray using a kind of steel that was nearly as good as some of the antique "beams." He had been taken captive and shipped to Venus for final disposition . . . the ancient, brutal wheel a reward for his fine effort for the future of man. These hidden rulers of Earth and the Hagmen—the Hag herself—had no use for such a man but to crack his bones. I understood the whole thing much better. It still goes

on.

At another time I was standing in an apartment of Hecate's noticing some very beautiful figures of women. They were very realistic—colored like life. Curiously, I touched one of the beautiful nudes. It was not stone but had a "give" to it—like a firm cushion. Looking closer I saw that the figures were literally stuffed women! Once they had been beautiful living creatures . . . creatures vibrant with the surge of life. Whether they had incurred the wrath of Hecate, or merely that she had coveted their bodies, so much lovelier than her own bulky carcass, I never knew. But the Hag had them now, permanently . . . had them stuffed and decorating her chambers, like the trophies of a hunter.

This . . . this was Hecate, the Mother of Sin . . . my unlovely, all wise Mistress who was telling me of her plans to pursue the Gods Themselves with me at her side.

CHAPTER IX

"Expect that by such stairs as these," thus spake the teacher, ponting . . .

"We must depart from evil so extreme:

. . . I raised my eyes,

Believing that I Lucifer should see

. . . but saw him now

With legs held upward. Let the grosser sort,

*Who see not what the point was I had past
Bethink them if sore toil oppressed me
then.*

—The Divine Comedy

UNDER the combined influence of the Tuon intelligence that directed my every action, and the spell of Hecate's marvelous ancient mech, the incident of the discovery of the dark bone in my head was forgotten . . . even my Evil Mistress had, seemingly, dropped it. We were languidly tasting the delights the ancient "stim" possessed in limitless streams.

Suddenly the quiet spell broke.

Shattering precedent of ages, Enora flung aside the drapes covering the door, and, with the shortest of salutations, rushed to the couch of Hecate, yelling hysterically, "It's an old spy device, Oh Hecate! A spy device of the Ancient Ones—it broadcasts a man's thoughts!"

The shrill tones had hardly died in the room when the Tuons made the move they'd

deferred for so long. Like a switch had been thrown, I was galvanized to action. I had nothing to do with it. A powerful compulsion seized me. Leaping between the two huge women, I swung a terrific sleep-inducer at the smaller and closer one which happened to be the aide. I connected powerfully—with a brick wall. That old bag had been under the integrative ray too much—soft and fluffy like a chunk of concrete! I yelped—thought I'd broken my hand!

Instead of folding up like she should have, she didn't even grunt—just looked at me, all the time tugging frantically at the gun holstered at her side. Boy! I had to think fast. If she got that little playtoy out it would have been all over for me—except for flowers and slow music. I stepped back, my hand feeling like it was broken in a hundred places, my eyes on that wicked little magnetic dissociator that forever nullifies the tiny magnetic charges that hold all matter together. I had no desire to go up in smoke, for love of the Hag or anything else.

(I never will know what kept that thing sticking in her belt. In the years that I had seen and used the hellish weapons of the caves, I had never before seen one that didn't function smoothly. Maybe the Gods love my big baby face.)

When you neck feels the breath of the Grim Reaper, thoughts that take minutes to relate, race through your mind like lightning—that's the way I wondered why Hecate hadn't taken a hand in the thing—so I looked and there was the big cow, hurriedly pulling her massive bulk over to the bank of controls.

"Oh, oh," I thought. "Here's where little Jimmy gets what is known in some circles as 'the works'—gotta do something—with haste."

I moved in on the aide. She wasn't too hep to Earthly "rassling," so when I rammed one leg behind hers and heaved with my shoulders, the old battle-axe went over like an iron balloon. She hit the floor and went sprawling—the gun getting loose and skidding away from her. I grabbed it—too late.

HECATE was still one jump ahead of the opposition. She'd gotten to the mech's control panel and the jig was up. Before I could level the dis-gun at her and

fire, a beam sprang out of the great old machine, stopping me cold, the surging power of Hecate's beam freezing the will that coursed from the antique spy-mech in my head.

I stood still. A living pawn. Two ancient machines fighting silently for control of my body. The Tuons were doomed to fail from the first. They were matching skill with the sharpest hands on two planets, and for all I know, the best mech artist on all ten worlds.

I couldn't think. I was just aware of what was going on. Then, shortly the huge old mech under Hecate's flitting fingers slowly gained the upper hand. I guess the Tuons were too far away to last too long.

Like a puppet on an invisible string, I moved toward the Hag, seated at the control panel. I was numbed or I guess I'd have gone mad at the hell-fire flashing out of those proud, angry eyes. The very hate of hell was burning into mine as I stepped up to her and meekly handed the dis-gun to her—as SHE willed.

Something—an affectionate banshee, or the gods, stayed the awful anger that had destroyed hosts of ahler men than me—and for a lot less, too.

She looked at me for a long, long moment, then summoned some of the guards that never were far from her. They and the aide who had picked herself up off the floor by this time were commanded to wind me with certain coils of wire. They were experts at that sort of thing because in a matter of seconds I was tightly wound round and round with many turns of wire and hustled off to the cells in the huge prison under the city of Disin, a prison, incidentally, from which there is no record of anyone's returning alive.

I'll never know . . . and it's cost me many a night's sleep trying to figure it . . . just what the Limping Hag WOULD have done to me if . . .

THAT night a soft hiss that wasn't caused by the vermin made me sit up on the crawling mat I was on. I held my breath . . . listening.

The door slowly opened . . . very slowly, not making a sound. The lock had dissolved in a puff of dust or smoke like that which had almost claimed me earlier that day.

An apparition from a drugged nightmare

entered the cell . . . a tall column of barely heard hissing noise, yet I knew that the noise meant something or somebody.

The column of sound seemed to bend in the middle, bending in my direction. The sweat stood out in cold beads on my forehead. I thought: "This it it—Hell. What a way to die, in a stinking little cell . . . alone."

Then, like the chorus from a basket of snakes came a louder hiss, a hiss that I recognized as a voice . . . and I knew that voice.

"You big haboon!"

"Ceulna!" I moaned, both because my hands were painning me and because of the shock of hearing her voice here under what I knew was an enemy city. "Ceulna, beautiful, what are you up to? You shouldn't be here, you—?"

"Ask me no questions, you overstuffed baboon," she cut me off. "You plaything of a hyena's daughter . . . you fancy fool for that spawn of hell. Oh, you're impossible! You're not worth the trouble I take."

I tried to say something, but she commanded, "Shut up. I'll talk for you."

She was most explicit. "Here, put this on and keep quiet!" Somehow I felt like a married man caught in delinquency. I had not known Ceulna gave a damn for me until she bawled me out that night. But, oh brother, what a job she did, then. Nothing could have been better calculated to bring my sleeping self back to life. She cut my ropes and slid some soft, rustling stuff over me and fastened the two whirling discs about my shoulders, then, walking through the door, she disappeared from my senses. I followed. The faintest possible whirring was the only guide my senses could find to tell me where Ceulna had gone. I followed that faint shadow of a sound that was she, and passed a dozen dead guards, great holes of nothingness where the center of their stomachs should have been. When Ceulna killed someone, she killed them.

MILES later, my unaccustomed feet stumbling after Ceulna a thousand times more anxiously than they had the first night I met her, I caught up with her.

"For God's sake, Ceulna, tell me something."

"You keep quiet, you overgrown lady

killer, you— Of all the men Ceulna could have on two worlds, she had to want you, the only one that would be fool enough to fall into Hecate's arms. It would be better if you were dead. Keep still, we are still in danger."

I swear we walked ten solid miles, and I could get nothing out of Ceulna but violent recrimination. Then, in those gloomy, forever dark caverns, we came upon, of all things, an electric car that I swear was built on Earth, and recently. We got in, in silence, and due to those suits, in non-existence, apparently.

Two hours later, we were mounting in an elevator toward the city of Lefern above. She told me that much. Going into the buildings that I knew were upper Lefern from the rustling leaves outside, she led me into an apartment that I recognized as her personal living place, for the dancing costumes hung in the transparent closet, and the little globe of the kind she had shown me on Earth in the secret caverns rested on a low table. She must have gotten another one. Everything in the room said, "The graceful, lovely, Ceulna lives here." I was immensely glad to sink into a huge chair and just look at her. A great load had lifted from me, and although I was not able to think clearly anymore, I knew I was home.

CHAPTER X

*The Veline fountains, and sulphurous Nar
Shake at the baleful blast, the signal of the war.
Young mothers wildly stare, with fear possessed,
And strain their helpless infants to their breast.*

Virgil's Aeneid.

CEULNA was still boiling. "For months," she stormed, "I have watched you over the sugments, listening to you make love to that living slime, that giantess of the abyss, that compound of baby's lives and selfish will. And when you get in trouble, who gets you out? I have to! You big blundering oaf, you wasted effort of a mistaken mother. What are you, anyway?"

"Ceulna," I said slowly, "I am angry myself at myself for all that I have lived through. But, I swear I could no more help myself than fly. I am more happy to see you than anyone could explain. It even makes me happy that you should be angry. I didn't know I meant anything to you. Now I know you care for me. Since you

have read so many of my thoughts, you must know what I feel for you, though I have not had much time to think about it."

"That's another thing. All this time in the arms of the ugliest woman on two planets, and you haven't even thought of me, and now you say you care. Bah! And I risk my neck for you. Oh, why are women made that way? If there was a man, a real man wanting me, I would go out of my way to be nasty to him. Why? But just let a big self-centered oaf like you who does not even think of me get himself in trouble, and I nearly lose my neck to pull him out of the toughest prison on Venus. Well, say something, you bovine paramour of an old witch, aren't you even grateful?"

"Why are you so angry, Ceulna? Because it makes you so beautiful with your green eyes flashing and your face flushed, or because it is a reaction from worrying about your man so long? If that's it, come here and I'll show you something."

She moved closer and I wrapped my too-strong arms about her and she started to cry. "From now on, Ceulna," I started to soothe her, "I'm your man; you bought my life with your courage and it's yours. It's yours to do what you want with it."

After crying for a long time, she began to explain. "When the Hag put you down there, I knew it would only be a day or so until some of those hangers-on who have been wishing for your place in her so-lovely arms, her so-sweet embrace, would find a way to do away with you, and much the lovely ogress would have cared what happened to you. She does not like to be made a fool, even if you couldn't help it. I asked Oanu for the suit of invisibility. They are very rare and little known, but there are a few found now and then in sealed compartments in the old dwellings. Only the ancient secret-service owned them, so there are not many. They cannot be detected by an ordinary ray, unless it strikes one directly, and the only way such a feat could have been accomplished. They nullify all vibrations leaving the body. But how to get there without walking all the way? We finally decided to use the electric car, after covering all the wires and motor with material taken from another suit of invisibility. Well, it worked. We have maps of every bit of the old caves and it was simple to find a way into the part where the prison has been built. I doubt if they have such

maps themselves. It was simple, yes. But this does not mean that you are forgiven. Later, maybe."

"BUT I don't understand how you came to have such influence here and how you got them to help you. How come?" I asked her, just to hear her voice again.

"I earn what I get here. They were glad to have me when they found that I knew of Earth-ray and of Hecate. I drew a very high allotment of credits for my work. When Oanu learned that I knew you, she put me in the group who watched and controlled the unconscious spies who are equipped with the device which is still in your skull. So, I know all about you, you vampire's plaything. You . . . !" In spite of herself, Ceulna was forced to laugh at my lugubrious expression. So she laughed and was soon in my arms again, crying softly. If I had known how Ceulna felt about me, I would not have been so ready to leave Lefern for our enemies' hospitality and for the arms of the oldest and ugliest woman on two worlds.

As I sat with Ceulna in my arms, enjoying the happiness and relief that she had brought to me, Oanu came in. She looked at us, a peculiar smile on her face. Ceulna did not rise, and I couldn't with her in my lap. But Oanu understood. She sat down, lighting one of the purple cigarettes of Venus.

"It is too bad that this love I see before me had to be dragged through the slime by Hecate," she said in better English than I had heard from her before. "If either of you had mentioned your acquaintance to me when you were here before, I would have brought you together. Then, all this could have been avoided. But it is over now. Our armies are gathered in the caverns under Disin and you and Ceulna will each lead a detachment. Your knowledge of the place should prove most useful. Within a few hours we will be ready. You had better refresh yourselves, then join your section. There is little time. It will not be long before Disin is in our hands. Simultaneously, the other cities in Hecate's hands will be struck in the same way from below, and, fortune favoring, we will end this vampire horror on Venus.

"Thanks to your efficient love-making," Oanu grinned slyly at me, "we know every weapon that Hecate will use against us, and

have prepared the counter weapons according to the ancient war-ray books. Before Hecate realizes that we have this information, we strike, for she will deduce from the incident of the instrument in your head that we do have such information. So the time is now! We have her figured out and an overwhelming counter-attack prepared for anything she may use. Her methods are no longer a mystery as they used to be to us, nor can she have a surprise for us."

"Oanu, something has been troubling me ever since the day I fell into Hecate's hands. I asked her several times, but she always put me off. Where is Hank Farne? I haven't seen him since the day we were both questioned by Hecate."

"Farne has been idling in Disin. No one gave him anything to do, and no one harmed him for they feared you would hear of it. Hecate would not let him see you as she feared his influence over you would turn you against her. You will probably see him if we succeed in the coming attack," was Oanu's answer.

THOSE Amazons didn't pay much attention to me; I was politely told that I was boss of our group of thirty track-rays, much the same type that I had learned to handle under the Earth-ray-men. That boss-stuff was mere fiction, for I couldn't even talk their lingo well, and could hardly understand them. But they did pay attention to business. Through all the many dusty caverns leading to Disin, I knew that similar columns were racing madly toward the city of the vampires. The idea was to get there as soon after our discovery by their rays as possible. I realized that this attack had been caused by the necessity springing from the discovery of the spy-radio, in my head when I was with Hecate in her apartments, for she would guess just about how much we had learned of her plans and would change her whole campaign. To catch her in the midst of the confusion caused by this change was the reason for our attack. Also, there were many valuable men like Farne in the Hagmen's midst who would be killed if the attack failed. The old telepath-radio apparatus in their heads would be their death warrant now that Hecate knew what they were, and where to look for the apparatus.

In front of us vibrated the great fans of the black shorter rays, ready to ground any

beam they might throw at us. Lumbering behind the fans came the light tanks such as my own group, and behind them came larger and larger war-ray. All focused on a predetermined spot in Disin—that spot the place where the great general ro-control with which Hecate ruled the city had its intricately cabled, myriad-beamed, and electric-eyed being. This apparatus Hecate had had brought up, ton by ton, from the depths of an ancient ro-city. With it she could direct any man's whole activity or make the whole population obey the same mental impulse simultaneously. Always, a trusted follower of the Hag sat at this masterpiece of the ancient science, listening to the thought of the city and ruling that thought in the way that it should go, as prescribed by Hecate. A populace ruled in this manner by the ancient ro-controls accepts any occurrence without demur, no matter how much to their detriment. Once our dis-rays put this monster, the actual nervous center of Disin out of commission, their prime co-ordinating center would be cancelled.³

At a signal, immense beams from the giant tractors behind us lanced over our heads, up at the center of the web of telaug beams which ringed the old ro-control mech. In my penetray screen, I watched eagerly as the antique super metal glowed red, then white. But there was one thing our spies had missed, probably because the things had been planted so long before. Whether the heat of our dis-rays caused the explosion or whether they could not see our true position for the mass of black shorter rays under our dis-beams, I don't know, but a vast booming and roaring ahead, followed by a rolling cloud of choking smoke and dust, told us what had happened—the caves leading to Disin had been mined for just such an attack. Our forces had come within a hair of walking into the primitive trap. Simultaneously with the explosion, what seemed like a thousand

or more great dissociator beams hored down at us, and a myriad of dust belching holes appeared in the hardened rock of the cave-rooves ahead. Our "shorter" ray set-up, carefully figured out in advance for just such attacks on the basis of our full information on their weapons, were sufficient.

A few of our delicate telaug devices burned out from the overload and rolled to a stop for repairs, but the columns raced on toward the mass of tumbled rock fragments that now barred us entrance to Hecate's lair. Under the black shielding blanket of shorter ray, the dis-rays hissed at the tumbled rock, and the lava rolled slowly back toward us from the melted rock.

It would not take the big dis-rays fifteen minutes to melt away a half-mile of that rubble, but would the resulting passage be safe for the passage of an army?

Well, we'd find out, for streams of water were playing on the bubbling floor of molten rock and our wheels were rolling over the smoking rock before it had really cooled.

Overhead, the cracks left by the explosion reached upward. We had a few integrative rays playing upward to tie the rock a little more firmly, but I doubted they made much impression through the necessary blanket of "shorter" rays.

Far overhead as we rounded into a branching cavern, on the surface I caught a glimpse of a vast army approaching Disin overhead—a fantastic conglomeration of nightmare weapons, unbelievably huge, rumbling over what I knew was soft mud. As I looked a second time, I caught on. It was a projection of an imaginary army, done with a huge thought-record augmentor. This close to Disin, they had probably detected its nature, but when our attack had been gathering, it had certainly been very efficacious in the dim distance as a cover for our real attack from the caverns. Realistically, on the surface overhead, a purely imaginary army was carrying on a purely imaginary attack upon Disin!

³These ro-control mech were designed, of course, merely as an ever-present and all-knowing policeman. But in ignorant and repressive hands, they can become a device by which the whole thought of a city is held rigidly in a narrow rut. Many modern cities suffer from this mis-used ro-mech underlying the modern surface city. They are the origin of the God-myth, omnipresence cultivated by priests.—Author.

As we rumbled nearer and nearer to the heart of Disin above us, my respect for the Tuon efficiency and science went up by leaps and bounds. The ray-shielding which had protected the Tuon buildings from the Earthmen's attack in my first action on Venus, must have been understood by Hecate, or at least been figured out by now.

Yet, our rays reached upward all through the great medieval piles of clumsy stone that formed Disin. Why had Hecate not used that same type of ray-shield?

If she had covered this, the Tuons evidently had a nullifier for the shield in action, for nothing prevented either our vision rays or dis-rays from sweeping the length and breadth of Disin.

The myriad of rays which had combed down upon us at the time of the mines' explosion were fewer now. The rise and fall and the hiss of our dis-rays raved at the fixed installations within the great center building, evil's cloister, where the monstrous ro-mech dominated our transparent vision with its antique opacity glowing redly and more redly as we sought permanently to destroy this nerve center of the Hag's.

(Later, Oanu explained to me that the defenselessness of Hecate's forces was due to great fields of diffuse dissociation beams which nullified the effect of Hecate's shielding fields and shorter rays, as well as making it very difficult for the defenders to think or act swiftly or well.)

What happened as we finally closed in on the fortress mounting upward through dozens of ramps we bored with our dis-rays, was a surprise to me. I had expected much more of the apparently formidable outfit under Hecate of which I knew so much.

Out of the great courtyard, a score of the ancient space ships rose one after the other. The blood-takers, the core of the vampire organization, flashed spaceward at top acceleration in the ships that glowed from our concentrated fire. Fire that did nothing but heat the hull, for the ancient metal was impervious to most rays except over a long period of intense concentration of many rays.

We hadn't won so soon, surely? What had happened to cause their too sudden flight? Certainly the mighty and ancient knowledge of war that Hecate undoubtedly possessed was not so easily defeated. Yet, there were the ships fleeing—from us. Why?

The answer to my question was soon given. Scores of white flags suddenly were unfurled from every battery within the citadel. With them, terms of surrender blared out, as well as information that explained much to me.

I had not known there was much opposition to Hecate within her own forces, for I had been too close to her to learn anything about it. But the great thought-speakers they turned toward us said: "We have helped you by turning against the Hag. Our beams basted her departure. Most of the blood-feeders have gone with her, the others lie bere dead. Enter and be merciful, O mighty Amazons."

WE did. And Ceulna and I found a chance to do something we had dreamed of in more than one black night. We lined up the surviving Hagmen, and after permission from Oanu, separated them into two groups—those whom we knew well from the cruelties we had observed them in, and those whom we did not know.

This latter group we told to take the former to the children's "Palace of Life" where waited the great Moloch with his fiery mouth well stoked for them. I am not sadistic, but I enjoyed the sight of those ill-natured robots screaming their way to death in the flames more than any other sound I have ever heard.

Ceulna and I gave Farne a bad scare when we pretended not to recognize him in the line-up. The canny little man for once was at a loss. It was a joyous experience when we both embraced him, a very good moment to see the joy light his face . . . to say nothing of the relief. Such moments are what makes life worth the living. Greeting one's dog on coming home, meeting an old friend again, the crack of an evil neck between the hands, the laugh of one's best beloved, what else makes life worth the effort? Such moments are all too far apart. The fall of Disin and the flight of Hecate, the Mother of Sin, from Venus, was a long moment of that kind.

CHAPTER XI

Faust. "When I behold the heavens, then I repent —

Ay, go, accursed spirit, to ugly Hell. 'Tis thou hast damn'd distressed Faustus' soul."

Marlowe

OANU was not the official ruler of Le-fern and the allied cities of the Tuon race, but she was certainly a most respected leader among that superior people. Hard upon the heels of that fleeing score of an-

tique space ferries ascended a full hundred of Venusian filled space battleships, under Oanu. In the ship in which Oanu directed the pursuit, Ceulna and I pored over the great space view-screen, its huge master ray boring ahead of the fleet, God only knows how many miles, for one's mind is always prostrate before the potentialities of the ancient workmanship.

"How is it," I asked Ceulna, "that so many as a hundred space ships, still serviceable, are to be had from the ancients' leavings? I would think that they had needed every ship when they left Earth."

"I have often listened to the older people talk of such things—speculating about the Elder Gods is a favorite topic of conversation," answered Ceulna. "Those who know and read the old records say that the migration of the Gods was a long drawn out affair—over a century of great effort—with many trips back and forth to the new home in space. They saw that a strange infection called "de" ails all the machinery and the ships, everything left behind, that is why there is so much of it."

Finally we sighted the fleeing vampires, but we could not catch them. Oanu was wary. One ship followed them to Earth, marked their position on the map and returned with two great bores bored completely through the impervious hull of supermetal. The Earthmen were not having any of us, evidently.¹

Oanu approached as near to the point on the map as possible behind a mountain

¹This "de" is a deadly radioactive infection from the sun, and the Elder Gods took the most extreme precautions to leave behind anything badly infected. Themselves, far out in space, transferred to a clean ship, leaving behind even their clothes, after extreme treatment of their own bodies to cure the infection, and abandoned the very ship they left the sun's vicinity with, to drift forever in darkness. Such are Venusian tales about the God Race leaving the planets of our sun—the reason was "de," the most terrible enemy of life. For that reason, many ships were left, some so complicated that no one knew how to run them at all. And the old students of the ancient writings know that Venus and Earth are deeply infected with that "de" from the sun, that it is the cause of aging and dying.—Author.

²The old caverns were originally equipped with many great installations of sky-pointing master rays, whose purpose was specifically to defend the underworld cities against space attack.—Author.

range, then the fleet settled to Earth. Certainly she must have had information on the cavern ray of Earth, for many Earth source lifter rays gentled our landing.

Someone here must be rooting for us. Below our downward drifting tons, a great light flared suddenly and the vast mouth of some ancient landing tube yawned, still in use.

I was amazed to find all this vastly developed science of the ancient ones existing all these centuries on Earth, hidden from the otherwise credulous humans of Earth by their very incredulity of anything they do not know all about.³

Now, within that supposedly non-existent cave, waited a people whom you know all about, "THE LITTLE PEOPLE," the most charming inhabitants of Earth. They were few, for the centuries of handling the aging mechanisms with its now defective shielding, have made them nearly sterile—they have few children anymore. Many of them are changelings still—as in the old days, surface men's babes. They no longer steal surface babies and leave defective offsprings in their places, but now legally adopt them from orphanages. The blood of the little people has grown weak, but still they are the finest men I have ever met. The little people still love man and they welcomed us with the most delicious mental stim I ever tasted.

(Warning: There are some evil groups descended from castouts, in case you ever meet the "little people.")

The "little people" were very eager to help us against the new menace from Venus, having been practically besieged in their own area of the mountains, their home for many years.⁴ Those with whom Hecate

³From the pauper youth, Aladdin, down the pages of history to the modern science-fiction writers, the open-eyed among men have tried to tell others of the hidden magic of the ancients within those impenetrably walled caverns—tried to tell unsuccessfully all about this mighty gift of the old gods of Earth, with no more hope of success than had the pauper, Aladdin.

⁴Jewels from those very same caves could have paid for the publishing of this work. Would you bother to find out if it were true or not? No, we of Earth are too parblind to all the infinite corroboration of such tales about us.—Author.

⁵Exact locations of such places cannot be given, for the "little people" would be offended. For more about the "little people," see Merritt's "Dwellers of The Mirage."—Author.

had sought and found refuge were not friends of the little people.

Oanu was not one to quit with the job half finished. The bulk of the fleet returned to Venus, and soon a steady stream of supplies began to pour in. The whole paraphernalia of our attack on Disin began to be assembled for a similar assault on this Earth hideout of the Hag's.

THE news from Venus was splendid. Two of the cities of the Hagmen were still holding out, but were expected to fall at any time. Soon, Venus would be rid of the vampire system, and the children of that beautiful people once again free to build the great future that was very evidently their potential possession.

During this period, Oanu arranged for a series of brain treatments from the army docs designed to restore my original initiative and character as much as possible. Ray medical work is certainly far different from the ether and knife butcher work we of the surface world are accustomed to consider advanced medicine. These doctors of the penetray just laid me under a lamp that revealed every nerve in my head as if the organ were constructed of vari-colored glass as is a medical display. Then they checked every injury in my head on a chart. Finally, they "operated" with an extremely powerful little benray, a needle of concentrated beneficial force. It hurt in a good way, if you can imagine a good pain. This powerful little ray they focused carefully on the points of injury, one after the other. After an hour a day of this for a week, they pronounced me cured.

I was more than cured. Those docs didn't fool me. They had created several foci of super brain cells in my brain with that super ray. Mentally, I was a better man than I had ever imagined any man could be. I learned why they did not tell me. It seems the ben ray devices are extremely valuable—rationed for use only on the most deserving people, those most valuable to the race. To save discussion on the point, probably at Oanu's suggestion, they had given me, unofficially, a generous dose of some of their most potent growth rays.

Everything was rapidly reaching completion for the attack on the distant refuge of the Hag when—it happened! The "little people" had been so sure that it couldn't

happen, and we, I mean Oanu, had not considered the possibility, for the "little people" had been feuding with the ray-people who lived where the Hag's ships had sunk into the ground—and the "little people" knew their methods inside out. But, Oanu had forgotten that the addition of the Hag's experience to their array of apparatus was a factor rendering the whole a vastly more formidable set-up than formerly. For what Hecate didn't know about the old mech was known by few others on the two planets. Anyway, she found a weapon there that the "little people's" opponents had never used.

A diffuse field of force swept our caverns and stayed there. The stuff seemed to be a flow of radio waves nearly similar to thought waves, and the command it bore to our brains and muscles seemed to be "contract." Anyway, the stuff either accumulated a contracting charge in the nerves and muscles or she kept adding generator after generator to the power supply of the ancient radio-wave transmitter.

I knew that their mech was several hundred miles and a mountain range away from us, but that wave, like a radio wave of modern science, was not stopped by distance or rock. Our muscles just pulled up into tighter and tighter knots . . . at the end of ten hours we were unable to move hand or foot.

WE JUST sat or lay in painful knots of humanity and waited for the butchers to arrive. I swore steadily to myself. I swore viciously. Just when things were shaping so the surface men of old Earth were going to lose some of their age-old burdens of ignorant, all-powerful evil, that rabid witch, my beloved of so many long, lurid and I must admit, interesting nights packed with every sensation the body or mind could experience, pulled this ace out of her sleeve. The mighty Hecate, the Mother of Sin, the Devil's rival, the Holy Howling Horror herself, the only person who had ever been able to make me doubt that Evil was else than insanity, was going to get her Big Jim back again. Now the question that had bothered me so often was going to be answered. Unless help came within less than an hour, the old witch would have the whole thing in her ancient paws again. A great fear for what

she would do to poor Ceulna rose in my heart. I wept a little, cursed a little and involuntarily crawled before the mental image of that horror of the past. Soon I would be her thing again, or I would be dead with the lovely, fiery soul of Ceulna wilted beside me.

Waiting for the Hag, I couldn't move, so I thought of what I had seen of the "little people" . . . a thing many surface men have tried to see but failed. Some of the oldsters wore costumes of the fourteenth century, the kind you have seen "the little people" pictured as wearing. Long trunks over their legs, short jackets and a pointed hat or stocking cap pulled down over their ears, and pointed, turned-up-toe shoes, they presented an almost comical sight. They averaged a good four feet in height—bigger than one would expect. I suspect that they are not a separate race of men, but men who have lived so many centuries in the caverns that some thing lacking in their environment affected their growth adversely. The younger ones were dressed in modern clothes, evidently from modern American stores, though of course, in boy's sizes. Although many of them were extremely thin, they were a very good looking people. The "fairy drums" and "elfin piping" so spoken of by writers were present when we first arrived, but it was merely a kind of musical greeting to us. I remember nothing in particular to mention about it. Perhaps, I am becoming inured to the remarkable. However, now they have so much good modern music on tap on their radios. It may be that the art is dying out.

THEIR dancing, so often spoken of by other writers, was also present as a part of our welcome, but perhaps the costumes were not appropriate to the pattern of the ancient dances, or they had had no time to prepare a genuine program of merit. It was good dancing—very definitely identifying this group of "little people" in my mind with the legendary artistry in the dance which is attributed to them—but nothing more.

The most remarkable thing about them was a quickness of perception, a lightning kind of intuitive thinking, coupled with extreme agility of movement. But, I had had little time to get thoroughly acquainted with the "little people." They were a race

of good looking midgets, and their magic, which was their knowledge of the uses and possession of the ancient mechanisms of the Elder Gods, was their chief distinction. And, ironically, its value to them was evidently neutralized by the monopolistic attempts of the other groups possessing the ray to kill them and take it away. From what I could gather, most of their time seemed to be spent in fighting such efforts on the part of the other old secret ray groups.

Now they lay, their own muscles knotted in the nervous impulses sent by the Hag and holding them in pained and motionless little bundles on the ancient polished stone of the floor. Their faces were pictures of despair and fear, and the habitual way that fear sat on their faces told me that these impulses were not strange to them.

Far down below us, in the vast tubes that connect all these time-drowned caves, rumbled nearer and nearer the wheels bearing the Hagmen and their new allies, whom I had not seen.

At last, when our nerves were shrieking from the pain of our hursting muscles and the horrified and hopeless waiting that was our only consciousness, they came. Into the cavern rolled the ancient cars of the tubes, a long torpedo-shaped vehicle with many wheels both on the bottom and sides, for the tubes have turns where the sides are used to check side-momentum. These cars still work, some of them are being used under your feet today. And the men that keep them in repair know more in some ways than the best of surface scientists, yet avoid us of the surface. Why? It is the ancient custom to do so. If I should ask, "Why do people marry?" you may understand. That is our way, that is all.

OUT of these long, and to us, hideously ominous, vehicles poured a weird mob of shapes and sizes. These were the people of the caves whose ancestors used the worn-out apparatus and were affected by the terrible x-rays given off by the old junk, affected the same way that fruit flies are affected by x-rays in the modern experiments spoken of so much. This x-ray-caused-mutation had gone on for endless centuries among these certain peoples, for they were ignorant of the cause, and never ceased to use the defective apparatus. The end result was a deformed race beggaring

description. They had long legs and short bodies, or very short heads on very long bodies, bodies with arms at the hips and the trunk sticking up above the spider-like limb grouping. Some had hides mottled in black and white, some were covered with fine fur, and, surprisingly, some were normal and even beautiful individuals, but the effect of their entrance was that of the hordes of Hell loosed upon us. In truth, they were evil in a way I had not seen in action before. (The simple truth of some life in the cavernous sounds fantastic, doesn't it? Truth is a more fantastic and horrible thing than any mind can enwrap—and truth can be a more vast beauty than a man's mind can grasp—if it is. But Earth life, in truth, is a vast horror unperceived by us because we are accustomed to the horror.)

The cave filled with these horrible invaders. The paralyzing waves were shut off ominously. A few of the "little people" made an abortive attempt to reach the old mech, but died writhing in their tracks from the hand ray trained upon us.

The rest of us were grouped together in the center of the cave to await the rulers' disposition. Others took up the usual watch over the screens which are placed so as to bring a continuous view into the center cave of all the ones surrounding us, as well as the surface overhead. Usually, this set-up is the same one left by the Elder Ones, as no modern man could improve on their disposition of the weapons and view rays. These screens are very large, covering most of the walls to a height of ten feet, and nothing that takes place within thirty miles is missed if they watch them carefully.

We squatted miserably in a close group in the center, hope withering within us. Such is ray warfare. One second everything is your way—the next, you would be better off dead. We all knew the part of wisdom was to attack these distorted horrors hare-handed and die before the torture started, but we did not. Such hope is a betrayer . . . a weakness indeed.

At last came what I dreaded—Hecate and her party. Once I had been curious as to what she would have done with me, now I was to know what she would do. Ceulna would not leave my side; I feared Hecate might learn that she was my beloved. Ceulna knew better, but the swift adversity had upset her usual sense—she just clung to me and looked dazed.

HECATE had us kicked into a line and walked up and down, looking us over. Ceulna she singled out by her uniform, or perhaps she knew her from her description. She so honored a few other Tuons as well as myself. As I left the line at her gesture, Ceulna, still dazed, followed me, her hands held out numbly. Hecate didn't miss seeing that she loved me. My face was expressionless. I pretended not to notice the girl. The hag smiled grimly and gestured for the girl to be included in the little party she had selected as her special victims. The rest she gave over to the home team to do whatever they wanted to do.

The party began as we left in Hecate's train. It is very unnerving to see a woman hung up by her hair, while she is flooded with pain ray . . . particularly when you can't do a thing. You can't get used to it.

Hecate took us aboard the ship in which she had arrived from Venus. There she took a seat on her crystal throne, whether it was different from the one I had first met her on, I don't know. It certainly was the same type of apparatus, probably the ancient rulers used the thing themselves. No other set-up of apparatus I ever saw had so many varied types of rays controlled by its mech.

We stood and waited while she augmented our thoughts, searching each one of us, pumping everything out of us swiftly with her super-active, but, I was fast learning—not too sharp brain. Finally, she reached my brain. Her sharp exclamation of triumph as she saw what I felt for Ceulna told me what to expect. Now, she could hurt me as she desired without harming my body (which sub-consciously she wished to retain?). She would have her revenge on Ceulna, too.

Standing there and waiting while that ancient from Hell decided what fate would best fit our transgressions was one of the most painful periods I ever endured. Occasionally, her great yellow eyes burned into mine with an enigmatic expression . . . my skin crawled . . . my mind refused to imagine what she might be contemplating. About her stood a few of the blood-takers, hideous old-young creatures of Spanish ancestry for the most part. Age had left them alive, but had marked them in other ways. Tiny wrinkles criss-crossed their skin, and their noses and ears had grown out of proportion. All were very tall.

THEY were dressed in various fashions. Some of them had clung to the ancient Spanish styles—hose and doublet with slashed sleeves and puffed short pants. The women, for the most part, had adopted modern styles, though, some of the more attractive dressed in Venusian manner, which consisted of very little but arm bands, g-string, breast supporter, and many flashing jewels, and a plumed headdress. However, most of them were not beautiful, despite the young, stolen blood pulsing through their flesh and lending sparkle to their eyes.

A terrible weariness was in them, too. Taking the form of a consistent disapproval of everything they looked at, a constant sneer twisted their lips, a conviction that life had nothing more to offer them—that all life about them was worthless and, therefore, to be destroyed, rested on their faces. It was evident that age had been defeated in their bodies, only to take its tolls in other ways. Their faces did not show enjoyment of their stolen life. Even with the infinite pleasures of the High Gods at their finger tips, still, they were miserable creatures, lacking the wisdom to enjoy the fruits of their evil science.

"If we place them under 'Evil Dreams' from the punishment records, they will experience all the tortures and deaths and still be alive to suffer more, or to examine later for information should you need it," I could hear a giant fellow explaining his ideas of our proper fate to Hecate.¹⁰ She nodded her head in agreement and I looked curiously at him. He was a man whom I

knew for an intimate of Hecate's, an old one who had perhaps lived under Hecate's domination for centuries. He was clothed in the Venusian style, his body was brawny, but too big-boned to be attractive. His aquiline, narrow Spanish face served but as a base for his comically oversized hooked nose. His eyes were small, close together, and near-sighted. He wore thick lensed spectacles.

I knew that if this be-spectacled scavenger had his way, Ceulna, Oanu and I and the other unhappy Venusians in the party would die—over and over—the most hideous deaths these super-idiot could devise.

YOU don't exactly get to sleep under the dream beam. When it is turned on, there is an instant of vertigo and you wake up in another world—another person has taken possession of your body—a different life entirely is lived.

Soon, we were all strapped on the couches under the dream beams, and, simultaneously, we blanked out of this world. It was the same record for all of us, I suppose.

With our bodies trembling—yet untouched and unmarked—we suffered the unspeakable hell of having our flesh torn with hot pincers, of the skin of our bodies being removed slowly, inch by careful inch, while irritant powders and salt were sprinkled on the bared flesh and nerve ends, of having finger and toe nails mentally torn out, one by one, being immersed inch by slow inch into boiling water—eardrums throbbing with the agonized screams of

¹⁰These ancients are addicts of the "dream"—the reason one sees so little of them—one reason they do not try harder for power and pomp. The dream machines are the ancient libraries, which were not books, but thought records. To read one, one reclines on a couch, and a record is inserted in a nearby record augmentation machine. The ancient thought unrolls in a beam which conveys it to the brain in synthetic thought impulses. These impulses are vastly stronger than normal, self-generated impulses—vastly more pleasant and thrilling. Reading the ancient records which are accounts of magnificent people doing magnificent things (but, I suspect, things completely misunderstood) are extremely pleasant opium dreams to the addicts, though they were never intended for such a use.

The ancients left books, too, but the more usual record of the past was the thought record. They did acquire some education from these dreams, but the comparative dullness of everyday life the degenerate people of modern times

lived is so uninteresting to the reader of the ancient thought records, that he retreats again to his couch and to the world of the past where life is infinitely more liveable. The thought recording instruments were sometimes used, though their barren brains found little real use for anything. One of the uses was recording the mental agonies of an enemy under prolonged torture. These were too painful to listen to under full strength augmentation, as it would be equivalent to undergoing the same torture. But, they could gloat over them under a mild augmentation and know that the victim had suffered terribly. Though not present at the actual scene of torture, they could be sure that everything possible had been done to make some poor wretch's last moments horrible. Then, too, they could use such records to put a victim through many deaths and still have him alive to suffer again and again. This was what the unpleasant giant talking to the Hag was proposing that she agree to do to them. —Author.

one's friends unmercifully suffering the same sensations. Synthetic pain sensations are even more pain and agony than the actual experience because of the terrific, exquisite augmentation possible with the hyper-powerful ancient mechanisms.¹¹

This ultra-torture went on for weeks or days—Gods! I'll never tell you how long. Then came that vertigo that is the return from the dream submission, the awakening. As I returned to this world, I could still hear all around me the constant, terrible, utterly inhuman sounds of suffering made by the others of our party of Tuons who still were under the dream beams of pain recordings. They were tortured screams that would have made Scrooge weep in pity.

CHAPTER XII

*Hell and the gulf between, and Satan there
Coasting the wall of Heav'n on this side
night,*

. . . and ready now

*To stoop with wearied wings and willing
feet*

On the bare outside of this World.

. . . see'st thou what rage

Transports our adversary?

—Milton

AS I looked up, I found the giant form of Hecate beside me, a sly smile of triumph on her usually poker face. She didn't waste any time in polite formalities.

"The space ships of your friends are driving us to flight," she hissed. "Is it your wish to accompany me alive, or to remain here dead?"

¹¹These horror records were often taken through the eyes of young boys to catch the reactions of horror and pity and fear, etc., which naturally arise in the minds of the young. Such jobs of recordings were terminated often by death, as the boy's eyes would see too much. You see, the recording is a mental impression, not a visual one. Mental agonies of the victim would be cut in the mental vision of the boy, just as in moving-picture making, various angles are shot. Dream-making by the use of the ancient mech has been a highly developed art for centuries and its addiction has enervated the best of the life of the caverns since the earliest times. But, these records which we were to experience were rather crude affairs, consisting mainly of the pain of a victim of physical torture. The crew around Hecate were not exactly "artistically" inclined—Author.

My gaze flew to Ceulna, writhing against the straps in infinite agony of the pain dream. I looked back at Hecate.

"I'd like to strike a bargain with you, Hecate. Leave her here, alive, under a simple sleep beam, and I will go with you willingly and serve you faithfully."

She did not stop to ponder my words for she knew me too well. She nodded, then with swift, flicking motions of her huge long-fingered hands, she adjusted the mechanism of the beam over Ceulna. With a choking feeling of relief, I watched her lovely body subside from its straining against the straps and a slow smile of peaceful sleep steal over her face.

Then, Hecate strode about the room with a dis-gun in her hand, firing a short blast at each writhing Tuon. A great hole instantly appeared through their bodies, and at last they were still. Of all who had lain in the room under the torture of many deaths, she left only Ceulna and me alive.

She threw free the straps from my limbs, and, saying nothing, strode from the room. I followed, for I realized there could be little time. All about the caves leaped a strange blue fire which I realized must be the cause of the flight, for a bit of the fire touched me, and the flesh shriveled where it brushed my skin.

"Hell," I thought, "no wonder she was so ready to release Ceulna. She'll die anyway from that damned fire!"

Hecate divined my thought, and flung back at me. "The dream room is shielded well; it is probable that she will live. As for you, that little device in your head will not be there much longer. After that, we will see how you behave."

We entered the great old ship in which Hecate had returned to Earth after so many centuries of exile.¹² Before doing anything

¹²Perhaps the reader would be interested in some Fortean data that will answer his question as to "Why, if these ancient space ships DO exist, they have not been seen and reported to the public before this?"

The only answer the authors can make to this is—THEY HAVE! Strange ships HAVE been seen and reported . . . but we people who pride ourselves on our scientific attainments won't believe what we can—and have—seen with our own eyes. You are referred to the "Books of Charles Fort," (published by Henry Holt and Company, 257 4th Avenue, New York City).

In the 12th chapter of Fort's "Lo!" are these (Footnote continued on next page)

else, she placed me under a strong penetray and cut every nerve leading to the bit of camouflaged radio-mech in my head. It would no longer broadcast any of my thoughts, I heard Hecate thinking. Then she took a little double-beamed needle of force and with a loud report in my head, the tiny device blew its guts under a terrific overload. Now I was no longer a spy, but I had a hell of a headache. From the way things were going, I guess I was just predestined to be a vampire.

THE great ship, under Hecate's swift hands, rose slowly to the height of a dozen feet, and drifted rapidly down the huge and endless corridors. Ahead of us coursed the rest of the score of ships which had left Venus not so long ago. How long? I no longer had any way of knowing.

Ahead of the racing space ships, I occasionally had a glimpse of the wheeled vehicles of the distorted people with whom Hecate had taken refuge who were leading the way to some new position of strength in which to make a stand against the Venusian invaders.

On the rear view screen we could see a vast fleet of space ships hovering over our rear, far up in the strato-sphere, and lancing down from each ship a beam of blue force. All about us danced the deathly

fire which this beam induced in anything it touched, but the old ships seemed shielded well against the stuff, the deadly flames did not leap inside the ship. I realized that Hecate must be handicapped for experienced hands with these ships, for she must have abandoned the dozen or so ships that had remained with Oanu when the rest of the fleet had returned to Venus for supplies.

I dared not to think of pulling some hero stunt and taking the ship out of Hecate's long hands. One little "think" of that kind would have been death for me, for in this type of augment ray work, your thoughts are always wide open to those about you. Instead, I had to pretend a relief at being in her hands again . . . even simulate the wild attraction which she had induced to live in me . . . always a part of me when I was her slave. Apparently, I did this act well, for she paid little attention to me. One cannot plot and plan in ray work, one can only wait for a break without thinking about it, and don't wait too obviously, either. Somehow, there is almost never a real break. When things turn wrong for those whom one serves, you usually die with them.

Our ships finally came to rest in water. I recognized the black expanse, for the sheer knife-edge of the ancient wharf of

facts (which he culled from newspapers and scientific publications).

" . . . it may be that constructions from somewhere else have appeared on this earth, and have seized crews of this earth's ships.

" . . . **BROOKLYN EAGLE**, Sep't., 1891—something was seen, at Crawfordsville, Indiana, 2 a.m., Sep't. 5th. Two ice-men saw it. It was a seemingly headless monster, or it was a construction, about 20 feet long, and 8 feet wide, moving in the sky, seemingly propelled by fin-like attachments . . . it sailed away, and made such a noise that ———— was awakened, and, looking from his window, saw the object circling in the sky.

(Note the date of this occurrence.)

" . . . **ZOOLOGIST**, July, 1898—something was seen in the sky, near Copiapo, Chile—a construction that carried lights, and was propelled by a noisy motor—or a "gigantic bird; eyes wide open and shining like burning coals; covered with immense scales, which clashed together with a metallic sound."

" . . . **NEW YORK TIMES** . . . from Bonham (Texas) **ENTERPRISE** . . . a man living 5 or 6 miles from Bonham, had told of having seen something like an enormous serpent, floating

OVER his farm; and that other men working in the fields had seen the thing and been frightened . . . A similar object had been reported from Fort Scott, Kansas. "About half way above the horizon, the form of a huge serpent, apparently perfect in form, was plainly seen."

" . . . **NEW YORK TIMES**, May 30, 1888—reports from several places, in Darlington county, South Carolina—huge serpent in the sky, moving with a hissing sound, BUT WITHOUT VISIBLE MEANS OF PROPULSION. (Caps are ours.)

And finally—but this is by no means the last datum that Fort collected . . .

" . . . **ZOOLOGIST** 4-7-38—that according to the log of the steamship FORT SALISBURY, the second officer, Mr. A. H. Raymer, had, on October 28, 1902, in Latitude 5° 31' south, and Longitude 4° 42' W., been called at 3:05 A.M., by the lookout, who reported that there was a huge, dark object bearing lights in the sea ahead. Two lights were seen. The steamship passed a slowly sinking bulk, of an estimated length of five or six hundred feet. Mechanism of some kind—flns, the observers thought—was making a commotion in the water. "A scaled back" was slowly submerging.

Q.E.D.—Author.

rock told me we were back in that place from which Earth rulers had sent me and the other green recruits from surface cities to Venus to fight for we knew not what. It was different now, in spite of myself, I felt like a somebody as I marched up the long connecting cave into that part of the caverns which I had first entered more than four years before, by my count. It was hard to tell as the time recording system on Venus is entirely different. No use explaining it to you. It's irrelevant, anyway.

IN that room hung with the black drapes crawling with the sinister figure of the great crab of gold still sat the too-soft figure of the woman who had first greeted me so long ago. Hecate and myself, surrounded by the big shots of the vampire crew, stood before her.

"Greetings, O mighty Hecate," she sneered slightly in her mechanical voice, gloating a little over this great one of another planet, forced to plead here for refuge after such long superiority. "I see that things are not going too well with you."

Hecate was not one to bow her head to anyone. "O Nonur of the Dream-makers, think not that you are not included in the attack from Venus. They intend to wipe Earth clean of all blood-feeders—yourself included. You will be forced to fight for your life quite as much as for ours—and, I advise you not to take any other view. Too much insolence here and my strength can go on to other places where we will be better received, O Gracious one."

Nonur of the pouting, cruel mouth pondered the great Hecate's words visibly, and the sneer slowly drained from her face; her voice became dulcet.

"Knowing the Tuons as I do, O mighty Hecate," Nonur spoke, but try as she did, she couldn't quite conceal the faintest tone of irony in her voice. "I surmise that what you say of their intentions is probably true. Therefore, My Lady, let us forget our little petty bickering and get our two heads together on a plan for defense. Nonur is not one so unwise to spurn the wisdom of the All-knowing Hecate!" And so saying, she bowed her head just a trifle and a small smile played about her lips.

"That is better, my Nonur. Together we can drive those ships back into space whence we came, though the best use of the

space ray is not too well understood by any of us. We have little time. They may attack in force at any time. Again, they may wait for the gathering of an army within the caverns before they attack this position from the space ships for a double assault. In any case, we must not delay in making ready. If you will give me charge of a section of the caverns, I will get on with it."

I WAS soon manning a great old ray gun, its view ray lancing up—up how many miles I'll never tell you—up toward the scattered dots on the screen . . . dots that were the ships of the finest race of people I ever knew, even if they are dominated by women. My job was to center one of those dots on the cross-hairs and pull the lever releasing untold millions of flaming volts of destructive disintegrant juice skyward—to kill people fighting for everything that meant living to me. For all I knew, they might have entered the caves abandoned by Hecate and the monstrosities, found Ceulna and taken her aboard, and then continued the pursuit. She might be on the ship I was training my dis-gun on. I tried to think of aiming without doing it . . . an impossible feat. Seated at the bank of the master controls, Hecate flung a look at me that made the old re-response in me center the ship and pull the lever. The ship shuddered, pointed its nose slowly Earthward and fell . . . fell faster and faster and the guts in me fell, too.¹² My heart was a great

¹²The reader may be interested in other phenomena—not listed in the story, but reported in scientific periodicals, etc. From the Works of Charles Fort, again . . . "Upon October 31, 1908, the planet Venus was four months past inferior conjunction . . . there are vague stories of strange objects that had been seen in the skies of this Earth . . . back to the time of the nearest approach."

"In the New York Sun, Nov. 1, 1908 . . . is said that, near Bridgewater (Mass.), at four o'clock in the morning of Oct. 31, two men had seen a spectacle in the sky . . . something like a searchlight. It played down upon this Earth, as if directed by an investigator, and then it flashed upward."

(Fort assures us that all the balloons of that day were accounted for.)

"In the New York Sun, Dec. 13, 1909, it is said that during the autumn of 1908, reports had come from different places in Connecticut, upon a mysterious light that moved rapidly in the sky."

(Footnote continued on next page)

lump of lead, and all the time I was trying to act elated at hitting it. I hoped to die. I have never done anything harder, and I didn't know how to avoid it. I couldn't think; I had only to obey the ever present thought of Hecate.

She sat at a great ro-mech in the center of the space ray fort, reading the thought of each of us simultaneously and throwing her own controlling-strength thought where it would do the most good. Unquestionably, it was she who made me fire that shot with the ro-mech, but that didn't keep me from thinking I did it myself.

Her fierce yellow eyes blazing, her brow furrowed, her long nose quivering over the screens that reproduced the screen before each of us ro, she was a picture of fury, of the witch from the past at last at bay, but still fighting.

Fighting a fleet that wasn't retreating, but lancing down toward us, driving before them a barrage of force needles such as never flamed my way before. Through the impenetrable ancient metal around us, hole after hole appeared, stitching across the room in row after row of death. The ro at the ray around me screamed and died, to be replaced by others under control. They had no choice but to fight and die. Now, I was sighting and firing steadily. I hit several more of the distant, deadly ships of the

past, but none fatally.

Further flight was impossible for the Hag, for the ships from Venus ringed the whole horizon.

MY hands were scorched from the smoking heat of the metal of the gun—the long, ringed barrel, glowing redly—the whole works burning hot to the touch. Under Hecate's control, I sighted and fired. My hands, badly burned, were not allowed to let go the firing lever. There just weren't enough of us to fight efficiently, for I knew that in every direction lay monster weapons unmanned and not understood by the ray people here. I thought of the many men and women—wise, efficient "ray" of experience—whom I had seen die at Hecate's hands and at the hands of the others now fighting for their lives. I tried to figure how many of us there would be if we had all been well treated since the time when these began to rule so long ago. "Evil digs its own grave," I concluded, grinning a grin out of control—killing good men it could use for better ends.

A slave rushed into the great war-ray room, shouting a message:

"Nonur is dead, Oh mighty Hecate. They sent for you to take control—no one else left alive knows how!"

Hecate rushed from the room, a huge, weirdly ungainly figure, her long arms and immense hands swinging by her too-wide hips, her waist a marvel of thinness above those hips, and the swaying rock-gray shoulders heaving with ill-repressed rage.

It was the last I saw of her. She left the room without control—nothing but a couple of wounded ray-ro left alive, moaning on the floor. The others fled with Hecate, not realizing that safety would come when we ceased fire, for the distant ships were only firing at the flame of our ray—probably could not see us individually.

I waited till Hecate's rushing feet had lost themselves in the distance. Then I stole through the rooms, once full of that weird, dreadful life, now riddled and strewn with corpses. I found the chamber where Nonur's throne sat, surrounded by the gloomy black hangings with the dismal crawling gold crab over them. Behind one of the hangings I found the door by which I had entered. It opened without trouble, and I started the ascent to the surface.

"New York Tribune, Dec. 23, (1909) . . . that a "mysterious airship" had appeared over the town of Worcester, Mass. "sweeping the heavens with a searchlight of tremendous power."

From the "Sydney Herald" and the "Melbourne Leader" he takes an account of a fireball falling and exploding at Carcoar, in November, 1902. Here and elsewhere in Australia within a few weeks, the same phenomenon was reported. One, reported by Sir Charles Todd, of the Adelaide Observatory . . . a large "fireball" fell—so slowly it was watched for 4 minutes.

From "Greg's Catalogues" . . . bright ball of fire and light in a hurricane in England, Sept. 2, 1786—visible for 40 minutes. (That's about 800 times duration that the orthodox give to meteors and meteorites.)

Page 101. "Book of the Damned."
"London Roy. Soc. Proc. 6-276:

"A triangular cloud that appeared in a storm, Dec. 17, 1852; . . . visible 13 minutes; explosion of the nucleus.

See back to description of ancient God-built space ships . . . "Huge, and golden."

(Fortean material obtained from "The Books of Charles Fort," published by Henry Holt and Company of New York City.)—Author.

The doors were secured by bars on the lower side and all opened to my questing hands in the dark. Behind me, I could hear the muffled sounds of firing, the twang and thrum of the great coils that released the discharges, the sharp "splat" and "hiss" of the Venusian fire as it burned through the cave walls.

I wanted no more of it . . . if the Hag was to die, I saw no reason for dying with her . . . If she was to win and live, I was not crazy for an endless life as her pleasure robot, for she left a man little sense of his own. No, degraded as the life had made me perhaps, I saw no reason for not losing myself among my fellowmen upstairs, until I could contact sane, good "ray" like the Tuons and so find Ceulna again.

After what seemed the whole of Eternity, I broke out of the house that was the "front" for the stairs—my tortured breath coming in hysterical sobs, my almost naked body shivering in fear and sweat.

SOMEHOW, I got home. I don't remember how—I was punch-drunk and more afraid than I've ever been. Not of anything—just horribly afraid and unnerved.

I guess the elemental animal in me had taken over and I'd run like a startled deer. I'd run too fearfully—too much without thinking . . . I want to go back. I did almost as soon as I'd calmed down. That's a laugh—a hideous joke—I can't even find the house that contains the opening to the caves any more.

Now, when I talk to the ray that gihhers over the city, they mock me, laugh at my predicament, sometimes torment me with pain rays, but of information how to contact the Venusian rays, I can get nothing out of them. Did the Tuons' ships win? I don't know. Where can I find people of the caverns who will tell me how to find Ceulna and the invading Venusian rays? They laugh at me in their idiot way. They are the mad ones of the caverns . . . they never make sense with anyone. The antique ray-mech of Earth is still a secret, and I am out and can't get in. I'm not the first man to find himself shut off from that life. I know. In my place what would you do? There just ain't no way to get back into those caves that I know of . . . but there

must be a way. There *must* be a way!

* * *

WELL, that's the story. Interesting—but surely we don't expect grown men to really swallow all that stuff about caves under the modern world filled with prehistoric machinery—and flights to Sunward planets in ships older than history . . . flights right at this very time? That all makes a very nice tale—interesting for a few hours of reading, or so, but it isn't true really, is it? Why that sort of thing would earn us straight jackets these days, or a pile of faggots in the days of a few centuries ago . . . and we are not so noble and stuffy that we'd risk that.

No, friends, we are not going to tell you that it's true—you KNOW differently, don't you? That such things COULDN'T be. There have never been oddly weird things occur that Science couldn't explain . . . so how could we expect you to believe if we did tell you that it was truth? WE know that such things just don't happen, so we won't tell you that.

YOU have never been badly frightened in a dream and flung your arms out violently to protect yourself from the Gods only know what. And because that hasn't happened—well, you know how it is. And weird, unexplained chills running up your spine—oh, those are caused by drafts say, or—or tiredness. It's just a clever use of coincidence that we use those chills to make parts of our stories seem reasonable. That **JUST COULDN'T** be some of the people in the caves playing with us. We all know that.

And the magic talisman—the scarab ring—my brother wears on his third finger? Oh, that is something that I dreamed up, figuring that everybody knows the part the scarab played in Ancient Egypt and it would make the whole story seem very weird and mysterious. Really, I have never seen this ring get cloudy and little pictures form in it—little pictures of people in a stygian world. That wouldn't be reasonable, would it? Besides—YOU know that such things can't be . . . such things just aren't so. So, you can go to bed and sleep, dreamlessly. It isn't true . . . it can't be . . . or . . . COULD IT? It was a hell of a long dream, brother, if it didn't happen.

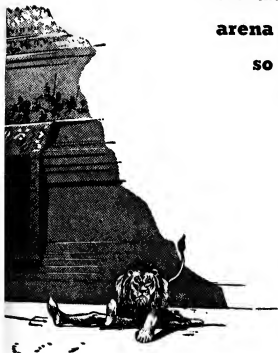
LET'S THINK OF MAN'S RIGHTS — NOT NATION'S

Scar-Tissue



By HENRY S. WHITEHEAD

Joe Smith just couldn't be telling the truth about his experience in the arena where Godbor killed him so treacherously—but there was the scar to prove it!



“WHAT is your opinion on the Atlantis question?” I asked my friend Dr. Pelletier of the U. S. Navy, as he relaxed during the afternoon swizzle hour on my West Gallery. He waved a deprecating hand.

“All the real evidence points to it, doesn't it, Canevin? The harbor here in St. Thomas, for instance. Crater of a volcano. What could bring a crater down to sea-level like that, unless the submergence of quadrillions of tons of earth and rock, or the submergence of a continent?” Then: “What made you ask me that, Canevin?”

“A case,” I replied. “Picked him up yesterday morning just after he had jumped-ship from that Spanish tram, the *Bilbao*, that was coaling at the West India Docks yesterday morning. She pulled out this afternoon without him. Says his name is Joe Smith. A rough and tough bird, if I ever saw one. Up against it. They were crowding him pretty heavily, according to his story. Extra watches. Hazing. Down with the damned gringo! Looks as if he could handle himself, too—hard as nails. I've got him right here in the house.”

“What are you keeping him shut up

I stood there waiting for the lion to begin the charge that meant death

for?" inquired Pelletier lazily. "There isn't anybody on his trail now, is there?"

"No," I said. "But he was all shot to pieces from lack of sleep. Red rims around his eyes. He's upstairs, asleep, probably dead to the world. I looked in on him an hour ago."

"What bearing has the alleged Joe Smith on Atlantis?" Pelletier's tone was still lazily curious.

"Well," I said, "Smith looks to me as though he had one of those dashes of 'ancestral memory,' like the fellow Kipling tells about, the one who 'remembered' being a slave at the oars, and how a Roman galley was put together. Only, this isn't any measly two thousand years ago. This is—"

Pelletier straightened in his lounge-chair.

"Good God, Canevin! And he's here—in this house?"

TWENTY minutes later Smith stepped out on the gallery. He looked vastly different from the beach-comber I had picked up near the St. Thomas market-place the morning before. He was tall and spare, and my white drill clothes might have been made for him. He was cleanly shaven and his step was alert.

Pelletier did most of the talking. He established a quick footing with Smith with an obvious view to getting his story of the "buried memory" which the fellow had mentioned to me, and which pointed, he had hinted, at Atlantis.

At the end of ten minutes or so, Pelletier surprised me.

"What was your college, Smith?" he inquired.

"Harvard, and Oxford," he answered. "Rhodes Scholar. Took my M. A. at Balliol. Yes, of course, Dr. Pelletier. Ask me anything you like. This 'buried

memory' affair has come on me three different times, as a matter of fact. Always when I'm below par physically, a bit run down, vitality lower than normal. I mentioned it to Mr. Canevin yesterday—sensed that he would be interested. I've read his stuff, you see, for the past dozen years or so!"

I was getting interested myself now. "Tell us about it," invited Pelletier, and Joe Smith proceeded to do so:

"It began when I was a small boy, after scarlet fever. I got up too soon and went swimming, had a relapse, and the next three or four days, lying in bed, I 'realized' that I was *memoriter familiar* with a previous life in which I wore clothing of animal skins and used stone-headed clubs. I had the ability to run long distances and go up and down trees without much effort, and could easily club a bear to death. The thing passes off, dims out, although the recollection remained quite clear, as soon as I was well again.

"The second time was after the Spring track-meet with Yale when I was twenty-one. I had run in the 220, and then, half an hour later, I put everything I had into a quarter-mile, and won it. I lay around and rested according to my trainer's orders for a week—not even reading a book. Then I 'remembered'—not the cave-life this time—but Africa. Portuguese and Negroes; enormous buildings, some of them with walls sixteen feet thick. Granite quarries and the Portuguese sweating the Blacks in some ancient gold mines. There were two rivers. I fished in them a great deal, with a big iron hook. They were called, the rivers, I mean, the Lindi and the Sobi.

"Curious kind of place. There was one enormous ruin, a circular tower on top of a round hill which was formed by an outcropping in the granite. There was a procession of bulls carved around

the pediment. Yes, and the signs of the Zodiac."

"Southern Rhodesia!" I cried out. "The Portuguese controlled it in the Fifteenth Century, before Columbus' time. Why, man, that place is the traditional site of Solomon's gold mines!"

"Right!" Smith remarked, turning an intelligent eye in my direction. "It was pronounced, in those days,—'Zim-baub-weh,'—accent on the first syllable. I've often wondered if it wasn't the Romans who carved those bulls, they had the place first, called it *Anaeropolis*. Plenty of legionaries were Mithraists, and the bull was Mithras' symbol, you know."

"And the last one, Smith," Pelletier cut in. "You mentioned Atlantis, Canevin tells me."

"Well," began Smith once more, "the fact that it was Atlantis is, really secondary. There is one item in *that* 'memory' which is of very much greater interest, I should imagine.

"I don't want to be theatrical, gentlemen! But—well, I think the best way to begin telling you about it is to show you this."

HE ROSE and loosening his belt, pulled up his shirt and singlet, exposing a bronzed torso. Beginning a half-inch above his right hip-bone and extending straight across as though laid out with a ruler across the abdomen, ran a livid, inch-wide scar, cut to eventually form scar-tissue.

Joe Smith tucked in his shirt, tightened his belt, and sat down again. "That's where it begins," he said, and, as my house-man, Stephen Penn, appeared at this moment with the dinner-cocktails, he added: "I'll tell you about it after dinner."

IT WAS Pelletier who started things off as soon as we were settled on the gallery again, with coffee and Char-

treuse before us.

"I want to know, please, how you happen to be alive."

Smith smiled wryly.

"I never told this before," he said, "and if I was somewhat preoccupied during dinner it was because I've been figuring out how to put it all together for you.

"It's hard to put into words but it seemed as if I were walking through a short enclosed passageway, rather wide, stone-flagged, and low-ceilinged. In front of me, beside me, and behind me, walked eighteen or twenty others, all of us armed. Up in front of us, in bronze armor, and closing our rear, marched eight legionaries of the Ludektan army assigned to us as guards.

"We came out into the drenching sunlight of a great sanded arena. We followed our advance guard in a sharp turn to the right and wheeled to the right-face before a great awninged box full of the Ludektan nobles and dignitaries, where we saluted.

"Do you get that picture? Here we were, prisoners of war—after a couple of months of the hardest training I have ever known, in the Ludektan gladiatorial school, about to shed our blood to make an Atlantean holiday!

"The really tough part of it was the uncertainty. I mean a fellow might be paired to fight one of his friends. But I was fortunate that day. I was paired with a Gamfron—a nearly black Atlantean mountain lion, an animal about the size and heft of an Indian black panther—Bagheera, in Kipling's *Mowgli* yarn! I had been armed with a short, sharp, double-edged sword and a small bronze buckler. Otherwise I had been given choice of my own accoutrement and I had selected greaves, a light breast-plate and a close-fitting helmet with a face-guard attachment with eye holes, covering practically my whole face and

the back and sides of my neck.

"When it came my turn to step out on the sand and wait for the lion to be released, I asked the official in charge for permission to discard the buckler and use an additional weapon, a long dagger, in my left hand. I received the permission, and at the signal-blast which was made with a ram's horn, walked slowly towards the cage-entrance. I had noted that the sun was shining directly, full against that particular iron door.

"My strategy worked precisely as I had hoped.

"THE great beast came out blinking.

Before its cat eyes became adjusted to the sun's glare I launched myself upon it, and when I sprang away, the hilt of that dagger was sticking in the Gamfron's back. The beast rolled over in the sand, hoping, I suppose, to dislodge the dagger. The hilt was twisted, I noticed, when the Gamfron again crouched for its leap at me.

"In the split seconds before it launched itself at me I could hear the wild tumult from the stands. The crowd swayed hysterically — screaming for blood. Mine.

"I side-stepped as the beast charged, but instead of trying another slash, I whirled, and as the beast plowed up the sand beside me, I threw myself upon it and, thrust my sword into the soft flesh of its throat, severing the jugular. Then, my feet and legs wedged hard under the animal's flanks. I reached under its jaws, swinging backward from the fulcrum of my knees and hauled the Gamfron's head backwards towards me.

"The snap could be heard throughout the arena. The great beast relaxed under me. I recovered my sword, stood up, placed my right foot upon the carcass and held up my sword toward the notables in a rigid salute.

"The next thing I was directly conscious of was a hand falling on my left shoulder. I relaxed, let down my sword, and heard the voice of the official in charge of the gladiators telling me that I was reprieved. I stumbled along beside him around the edge of the arena under a continuous shower of felt hats and gold and silver coin until I felt the grateful shade of a stone passageway on my almost melting back, and a minute later, with my armor off, I was being doused from head to foot with buckets of cold water.

"It was perhaps twenty minutes later when the official in charge of the gladiators came into the small stone-flagged room where I was tying the thongs of my sandals.

"The people demand your presence in the arena," he announced from just inside the doorway. I rose and bowed in his direction. A public gladiator in Ludakta had the status of a slave. Then the official announced: "You have been chosen to fight Godbor as the day's concluding event—come!"

"Half way along the passageway the official stopped and turned to me, whispering with earnestness and vehemency directly into my ear. And when he had finished I was a new man! Gone now were all the feelings of rebellious hatred which his announcement at the rubbing-room door had raised up in me. He turned and led the way out into the arena. And I followed him now, gladly, eagerly, my head up and my heart beating high.

"A THUNDEROUS roar greeted us, and the massed thousands rose in their seats like one man. A black slave stepping towards us from the barrier handed a bulging leather sack to the official. He took it and spoke to me over his shoulder. 'These are your coins that were thrown into the ring.

I will keep them safely for you'.

"Then we proceeded to a point directly before the great canopied enclosure of the nobles. Here, after saluting with my arms and hands straight up above my head and not giving their spokesman an opportunity to address me, I put into immediate effect what my unsuspecting friend, had whispered in my ear.

"I will fight Godbor to the death," I shouted.

"A deafening howl went up from the multitude. I waited quietly until the tumult died, and then as soon as I could be heard once more I addressed the nobles.

"My Lords, I have proclaimed my willingness to please you despite the Ludektan Law which requires no man to fight twice in the arena on the same day. I beseech your nobility therefore, in return for this my good will to meet your desire, that you accord me my liberty, if I survive."

"There was a deathly silence about the arena, while the nobles consulted together.

I stood there, rigid, waiting for this decision which meant far more than life or death to me. I could see the right arms of the members of that vast concourse being raised in the Ludektan voting gesture of approval.

"Then, as Bothon, who had been generalissimo of all the Ludektan armies, rose in his place to give me my answer, that sharp humming sound stilled and died and twenty thousand men and women leaned forward on their benches to hear the decision. Bothon was both terse and explicit.

"The petition is granted," he announced.

"Remembering clearly all that the arena official had told me, I waited once more until I could be heard, and when that instant arrived I saluted the nobles

and said:

"I would gladly slay the traitorous dog Godbor without reward, o illustrious, for not even yourselves, who deprived him of his Ludektan citizenship and condemned him to the arena, are better aware of his infamy than we of Lemuria who refused to profit by his treachery. I petition you that the rules which are to govern our combat be stated here, in his presence and mine, that there be no treachery but a fair fight."

"At this, which had been listened to in a dead silence that was almost painful, the mob on the benches broke out again. Watching the nobles' enclosure I saw Bothon turning his eyes to those about him. When he had gathered their decisions he turned to me and made the sign of approval.

"**B**ACK in the preparation rooms with the chief official himself over-looking every detail, I got myself ready for my last fight in the arena. I was very well aware that I was now confronted with the most serious ordeal of my life. Not only had I spent most of my strength in that conflict with the wild beast, but also I was about to encounter in the traitor Godbor, one of the most skillful and tricky hand-to-hand fighters that the Ludektan army had ever produced. He would be fresh, too.

"At high noon, Godbor who had been similarly prepared in another room, walked beside me in the usual form of procession, proceeding through the passageway and into the blinding glare, shortly to stand side by side listening to Bothon repeat the rules of the combat.

"And then on a great square of freshly pressed and dampened sand we two stood facing each other tensed for a conflict from which one or the other would never leave.

"At the single blast from the herald's horn I leaped at my enemy. He had started forward at the same instant himself. I caught his descending blade squarely on the knop of my bronze buckler, relaxing my left arm to lessen the shock of the blow, at the same time delivering a thrust above Godbor's buckler. The fresh-ground razor-like point of my sword struck his upper shoulder, severing the tendon and rendering his left arm useless. I made a rapid recovery, but the equally swift forward leap of Godbor brought him breast to breast with me. He managed to shift his sword into a dagger-like position, and I was barely able to divert the stabbing stroke which he aimed for my left side.

"We hacked away from each other then for, according to the stated rules of the combat, our initial attack-and-defense was completed. Then I lowered my sword as I saw Godbor drooping forward, his knees sagging under him, his eyes closing. As I stood there, waiting for him to recover himself, he suddenly dropped off the buckler from his left arm, and, launching himself forward, drove the bronze helmet he wore against my chest.

"I went crashing down under the terrific blow and I could hear very clearly, rising above everything, the howl of rage which rose from the spectators on every side.

"Then, Godbor was upon me, his face a distorted mask of hatred. His sword slashed into my right hip bone and across the lower and unprotected edge of my ribs.

"A dull-red cloud descended upon me, and a vicious stab of pain that swelled with each second. My fast-dimming eyes caught the edge of the strange spectacle of the people of the benches leaping down on the sand in their dozens and scores and hundreds, pouring over

the barriers into the arena like cascades.

"And, with the dimming chorus of their massed roars of hate in my ears, I let go of life."

JOE SMITH ceased speaking, rose, and walked over to the center table. I noticed that his hands trembled as he poured himself out the second drink he had taken since he had been in my house. Deep lines, too, that had not shown before dinner, were in his clean-shaven face. It was evident that the telling of his strange tale had done something to him. He settled in his chair again before either Pelletier or I offered any comment.

"I imagine Godbor didn't survive you very long," I said. "That mob probably took him apart."

Smith nodded. "He was very unpopular—execrated, in fact."

Pelletier's comments were in an entirely different vein.

"I beg of you, don't misunderstand me, Smith, but most people would say it's a wonderful yarn, as a yarn, but that's all. Atlantis, Zimbabwe, that cave-boy stuff! That scar of yours for a point of departure; well-known facts, open to any reader, about the ancestral memory theory; and all of 'em worked up into a yarn that is, I grant you, a corncracker! Exactly right, you see, for a couple of fellows like Canevin and me, known to be interested in out-of-the-ordinary matters. That, I say, is what the majority of people would say. I'm not insulting you by putting it that way myself. I merely call attention to the fact that there isn't a thing in it that couldn't have been put together by a clever story-teller."

Smith merely nodded. "Precisely as you put it," he said. "Precisely, except for this."

And he rose from his chair, once again loosened his belt, and exposed

that frightful scar.

Pelletier, the surgeon uppermost at once, got up, came over to Smith, and peered closely at it.

"Hm," he remarked, "the real mystery isn't in that yarn, Smith. It's in how you ever survived this! The breadth of this scar shows that the wound must have been several inches deep. It cut straight through the intestines and just about bisected the spleen. Such a cut would kill a man in a few minutes."

"It did, as I told you," said Smith, a little crisply.

"My dear man!" protestingly, from Pelletier.

But Joe Smith remained entirely unruffled.

"You know, of course, what scar-tissue feels like to the touch," he said. "Run your hand over this, Doctor. Then tell us if you ever felt any other scar-tissue like it. It *looks* like any other scar, of course."

Pelletier did as requested, his attitude plainly skeptical. But he straightened up from this examination with a very different look on his face.

"Good God!" he breathed. "There's nothing to feel! This thing only *looks* like scar-tissue! What—?"

Smith carefully tucked in his shirt.

"It's precisely the way I told it to you. I was born without any appearance of a scar, although it falls within the classification of so-called 'birth-marks'. It did not begin to appear until I was twenty-seven. That was my age when I died there in the arena, from that wound in the same place, just as I told you."

PELLETIER looked at Joe Smith in blank silence. Then he asked, "Did you have it on you during those two other 'memory-experiences' you spoke of, as a cave-boy, or there in Africa in

the Fifteenth Century?"

"No," Smith replied. "I suppose the reason is that I was not yet twenty-seven years of age in either of those two experiences."

"Well, I'll take your word for it all, Smith," said Pelletier. "It's been mighty interesting."

The two of them bowed to each other, Pelletier smiling whimsically, Joe Smith's tired, lined face inscrutable.

Just after this Pelletier took his departure.

Half an hour later—it must have been about eleven—Smith rapped on the door of my bedroom. He was in pajamas and bathrobe, and wearing a pair of my spare slippers.

"Would you like to hear the rest of it?" he asked, coming in and taking a chair. He placed something he had been carrying beside him on the wide chair's cushion.

"There isn't much more of it," he remarked, "but I'd rather like you to hear it all together."

"Fire away," I invited, settling myself.

"That 'birth-mark' of mine," he began, "isn't the only thing I could have shown you this evening. I had *this* around my waist, too!"

He reached down beside him and unrolled the thing he had brought into my room. It was a pigskin money-belt.

"There's between seven and eight hundred pounds in this," he remarked, laying it on the table beside him, "in Bank of England notes. I thought you might put it in your safe until tomorrow, and then I'll put it in the bank. And now, here's the rest of my story.

"I'd been on board the *Bilbao* nearly two months when we struck this port of St. Thomas to coal. It was, to be precise, the fourteenth of August when I went on board her, in Santander. Three days before that, while I was sit-

ting eating my dinner, a big fellow came in and took a table across the room from me. I didn't particularly take note of him except that he was big. He had an ugly face that seemed vaguely familiar.

"Then quite suddenly, it broke upon me. I knew who he was! It was 'Godbor', Canevin—Godbor to the life! The man who had killed me in the arena!

"I sat there, and just sweated. I remembered putting my face between my hands, my elbows on the table, and feeling just plain sick.

"And then he moved over to my table and sat down.

"He was civil enough. His name was Fernando Lopez. He was the first mate of the *Bilbao*, just arrived in Santander harbor, expecting to clear for Buenos Aires three or four days from then.

"Lopez proposed that we eat together. Somehow I couldn't refuse. There was almost a weird fascination about the man. While we ate I told him I was a painter and required as much time to myself, including meal-time, as I could get. I spoke, of course, without trying to insult him, but nevertheless giving the impression I wanted to be alone. But it was no use.

"We drank together, and within a few hours I had passed out. When I awoke it was morning—the morning of the day the *Bilbao* was to clear from Santander, about seven o'clock. And then I found my money-belt gone! Fernando Lopez, too, was gone! He had probably gone on board, I figured, ready for the ship's departure, confident that he had made a clean getaway.

HE SAW me, as soon as I came on board. I charged him flatly with the theft. He made no bones about it, admitted he had taken the money-belt from me after I passed out, and had it down in his cabin. I demanded its return and he shrugged, walking toward

his cabin.

"As I walked in after him, something struck me over the head. I came to in a berth, with my hands ironed, and a head that seemed too big for my body.

"For three days I sweated through a period that was like a nightmare.

"The captain, an old man named Chico Perez, who was Lopez' uncle, forced me to sign on. I was watched every minute and given the work of two men to do.

"They ironed me again the day we put into Buenos Aires. Lopez was taking no chances on my jumping ship and reporting him. Then, two days after we cleared from there, the old captain disappeared. I have no doubts in my own mind about what happened to him. Lopez probably threw him overboard.

"That fact, I imagine, saved me. You see, the entire crew had sailed with the old man, who was a part owner of the ship. Lopez, while he now commanded the *Bilbao*, did not dare to risk a mutiny if another member of the ship's company 'disappeared' in the same manner.

"We made four or five other South American ports, Cartagena last of all, and then we were to put in to St. Thomas for coal. This was the first American port of the voyage. I picked up a little hope.

"We were actually in sight of St. Thomas when I got my chance. It was about five o'clock in the evening, four days ago. I was on deck, and we had just made our landfall. Lopez was coming towards me across the deck. I waited until he was within a few feet of me, and then I lunged forward. My fist hit Lopez' jaw, knocking him flat on the deck.

"He was up almost instantly, snarling, and a knife appeared in his hand. I ducked his first rush and tripped him as he swept by me. His knife clattered

on the deck as he hit it.

"I lunged forward and my fingers closed over the blade. I don't know what happened next, but suddenly the knife was imbedded in Lopez' back and I was on my feet, trembling with a cold sweat.

"One by one the crew members walked up. They all seemed to be smiling at me.

"I watched the knife being withdrawn from Lopez' body by one of them, and then, five men quietly heaved the body overboard.

"Nothing was said to me. There was no report, no investigation after we anchored in St. Thomas Harbor.

"I had gone straight down to Lopez' cabin after the money-belt, put it on, and came back on deck.

"NO ONE stopped me when I went ashore. I imagine that that ship's family was only too glad to get rid of the fellow who had relieved them of Fernando Lopez. The rest of it you know, Canevin. I might add that I haven't the smallest possible regret over killing Lopez. If those 'ancestral memories' of mine are authentic, I have killed before, but never in *this life*, certainly."

Joe Smith sat silent, and I sat across from him and looked at him. The only thing I could think of to ask, seemed an incongruity after what I had listened to that day! However I had to ask it.

"What is your real name, Smith?" I inquired.

He stared at me.

"Joe Smith," he said.

I nodded then. "I'll put your money in the safe and we'll go to the bank with it in the morning."

I saw him out, and picked up the money-belt from the table and carried it over to my house-safe standing in the corner of my bedroom.

I opened the safe and was about to lay the belt inside when I felt something rough against my hand. I turned it about and looked. A name was embossed upon the fine pigskin leather of the other side. I held it up to the light to read it. I read:

"JOSEPHUS TROY SMITH."

I put the belt inside and closed and locked the safe.

Then I came back and sat down in the chair where I had listened to my guest's recital of his recent adventures aboard the Spanish tramp steamer *Bilbao*.

Josephus Troy Smith. It wasn't so vastly different from "Joe Smith," and yet what a different viewpoint that full name had given me! Josephus Troy Smith, America's foremost landscapist! Josephus Troy Smith! I realized now whom I was having the honor of entertaining here in my house on Denmark Hill, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands of the U. S. A. He was the eccentric artist, Josephus Troy Smith—or was he . . .

ERRORS IN SPECTROGRAPH OF STELLAR BODIES

IN CYCLONE regions it has been noted that reddish or yellow lights appear before the cyclone strikes. The phenomenon is sometimes accompanied by great heat. In monsoon regions, pink or bluish lights herald the monsoon over the ocean, and smoky color over the land. These colors are due to atmospheric strata, some of which extend upward as much as many thousands of miles. There are millions of layers (like

the skin of an onion) in the atmosphere. Therefore, in making a spectrographic examination of a stellar body, the extreme sensitivity of the spectrograph cannot but record these various bands of color that intervene within the earth's atmosphere. Thus, it is an error to make a positive statement that (for instance) the atmosphere of Mars contains oxygen or hydrogen; or that of Venus carbon di-oxide.



**When all the lights in the
city went out, nobody suspected
the trouble was in a very small stable!**



The Man Next Door

By ROBERT MOORE WILLIAMS

"FIGURE we're within two blocks of it," the technician said, in response to Ferguson's question.

"Thanks," the engineer answered. "This as close as you could get?"

"Yes. The motor cut out three blocks back but it was at the top of the hill and we coasted this far. I've got a dead fix on it now. You want to listen to it?"

At Ferguson's nod, the technician ducked into the back end of the radio-equipped trouble shooting truck. The small directional antennae mounted on top of the light truck was pointing

steadily in one direction.

The technician leaned out of the truck. He was holding a set of headphones toward Ferguson. A shrill, high-pitched scream was coming from them.

"I'm getting that on a galena detector, believe it or not," the technician said proudly. "When we hit this area, my regular receiver went blooie! Streaks of fire a foot long jumped to hell and gone over the inside of the truck. I was damned lucky I wasn't electrocuted. When I got over the shock and found my receiver wasn't any good, I hooked in the crystal de-

tector and damned if there wasn't enough juice coming in to work it. We took several fixes and were heading in this direction when the damned truck quit."

"That was fast thinking," Ferguson said approvingly. "You say the center of the disturbance is within the next two blocks?"

"That's the way I figure it. It's on the right side of the street and it's so strong it can't be more than a block or two away!" The technician paused. A worried note crept into his voice. "What in the hell, Mr. Ferguson, do you think is causing all this confounded row?"

"I wish I knew," Ferguson answered.

"It's sure blasting a hole in the ether, whatever it is," the technician said moodily. "I'll bet there's not a radio in the whole state of Illinois that's working right now!"

"I'll bet you're right about that," the engineer said.

Muffled profanity was coming from the front end of the truck. Ferguson moved up there. The driver had his head under the hood. Holding a flashlight in one hand, he was poking around with a screwdriver. He looked up.

"Oh, hello, Mr. Ferguson. I almost didn't recognize you in the dark. You in on this too?"

"I heard it on my own radio when it started," the engineer answered. "What's wrong with the truck?"

"The damned coil is burned out," the driver answered. "Shall I go back to the garage and get a new one?"

"Yes. And while you're about it, get one for my car too."

"Huh?"

"I left my own buggy back there a few blocks. The coil is burned out on it too. Lend me your flashlight, will you? You won't be needing it for a while."

FERGUSON took the flashlight and was gone before the driver began to ask questions. He poked his way down the dark street. The street lights were out. No lights showed in the row of shabby tenements on both sides of the asphalt pavement. A few of the tenement dwellers were standing out on their sidewalk morosely cursing the power and light company for giving them poor service. Others were aware that something besides poor service was to blame for the blackout.

"What's happened to the cars?" Ferguson heard a woman ask nervously.

No automobiles were passing on the street. The engineer shrewdly suspected that the coil of every car coming within four or five blocks of the center of the disturbance he was seeking was burned out. All the cars that came into this section of Chicago stopped dead tonight.

A flashlight beam popped into Ferguson's face.

"Where you goin', Mack?" a heavy voice asked.

The engineer recognized the cops by their uniforms. "I'm Malcolm Ferguson," he said, producing his credentials. "I'm chief engineer for Union Power and Light. The company has had complaints that all power is off in this area. What's going on here?"

"Oh," the cop sounded relieved. "I'm Lieutenant Smith. We were cruising down the street when our car stalled on us. The street lights went out at the same time and our radio squawked once and went dead on us. Maybe you can tell us what's going on here?"

Although lieutenants on the Chicago police force usually are not men who scare easily, this lieutenant sounded a little scared. Puzzled. There was something about this sudden stoppage of power that he didn't like.

"I can't tell you much," the engineer

answered. "I think, however, there is an energy center within a block of where we're standing. It's radiating enough current to burn out radio sets, coils in automobiles, and to throw out the kickback protectors in our power lines."

His voice was matter-of-fact. If it concealed more than it revealed, he kept this to himself. He thought: An energy center that is radiating enough current to burn out coils in automobiles over a circle five or six blocks in diameter, that throws our kickbacks out and keeps them out, that is probably drowning out every radio set in Illinois, Wisconsin, Michigan, and Indiana, that's some energy center!

"We're within a block of it, you say?" Smith questioned.

"I think so," Ferguson answered. "The company keeps light trucks with special radio equipment installed on them cruising twenty-four hours a day. Their job is to catch all leaks that develop in the power lines. When this thing came on, they caught it. One of the trucks got a fix on it that located it within a block of where we're standing. It's on the right side of the street—"

"The right side of the street, you say?" the second cop spoke for the first time.

"We're pretty sure of that," Ferguson spoke with quickened interest. "Have you seen anything?"

"No," the cop slowly answered. "But this used to be my beat until I got promoted. And there's a screwball inventor—"

"Yes," Ferguson said. A little of the interest had gone out of his voice. This disturbance was a damned sight too big to be caused by some crank tinkering in an attic. Still you never could tell. Ferguson had a profound respect for the work men sometimes did in

attics.

"He couldn't be doing it," the cop continued. "He just couldn't be! But he does live in this block and his house is on the right side of the street—"

"We'll go look," Ferguson decided.

THE cop led them to an old brick house with a brownstone front, a relic of the days when Chicago had been a much smaller city. The house was dark but the lieutenant's probing flashlight revealed a Rooms for Rent sign in the front window.

"He's got a shack in the rear," the cop said.

They went around the house and into the back yard. A story and a half building stood in the rear. In the days when the brownstone front had been built, this building in the rear had been a stable, with room for carriage, a buggy, and two horses. Hay and grain had been stored in the loft.

A dim light gleamed through a window. There was no sign of movement, no flash of sparks that might go with a heavy energy discharge.

Lieutenant Smith was unimpressed. "A stable!" he snorted.

Ferguson moved forward.

"But the thing we're looking for can't be in a place like this," the lieutenant protested. "If it's raising as much hell as you say, it's gotta be big—"

"You never can tell what's in a stable until you go look," Ferguson answered. He rapped on the door.

"Who is it?" a voice asked. "What do you want?"

"Open up," Ferguson answered. "We want to talk to you."

Sounds of movement came from inside the stable. The door creaked, opened. A stooped, white-haired, gentle faced old man blinked at them in the light of the gasoline lantern he was holding. "The power is off," he said

fretfully. "Fortunately, I had this lantern. What can I do for you?"

Ferguson opened his mouth, then closed it carefully. He didn't know what he had been expecting to find in this stable but it certainly hadn't been this. "I—we—" He was stammering.

Behind him he heard Lieutenant Smith snort.

"Sorry to have bothered you," the engineer spoke. "There's a very serious power disturbance somewhere within this block. We are trying to locate the source of the disturbance and we thought you might help us."

He was apologizing, backing out. The engineer had an open mind, he was willing to believe anything, but he was not willing to believe that the center of the disturbance that was blasting the radios of four states was here in the stable.

"Power disturbance?" the old man questioned. He blinked at Ferguson. "Oh, my goodness!" he said.

Turning, he darted back into the stable. Ferguson saw him press a push-button on a small red box sitting on a workbench, heard the soft click of the switch.

A second after the click of the switch the lights in the stable went on. Lights suddenly showed in the house next door. Then the street lights came on.

Ferguson swallowed. He heard a car pass along the street in front, heard the smooth hum of its motor.

Ferguson was cold. A wind that blew over miles of glacial ice felt its way through his clothing. His hands, his feet, his brain, his whole body, were cold.

"The lights are on," he heard Lieutenant Smith mutter. The lieutenant sounded like he was trying to think about something and was finding thinking a darned hard job.

Ferguson was trying not to think.

The inventor appeared again in the stable door. "I'm sorry," he said. "I didn't know."

He frowned. "I still don't know—"

The frown became more intense. "I can't even begin to guess—"

He was aware of Ferguson again. "I didn't know I was doing it," he said. "I didn't know."

"I believe you," Ferguson said. "But—may I come in?"

"Of course. Certainly."

"Hey!" Lieutenant Smith called. "The lights are on."

"Thank you, Lieutenant," Ferguson answered over his shoulder. He closed the door. If he left two slightly baffled Chicago cops outside, he took one terribly baffled Chicago engineer inside—himself. He walked across the stable and looked at the instrument sitting on the workbench.

IT WAS a metal box about eight inches square. Painted red. Five metal-encased cables less than a foot long led from it. The cables were looped now, not connected to anything. On top of the box were two buttons, one marked START, the other STOP.

"My name is Ferguson," the engineer said. He explained who he was and what he was doing.

"I'm Phillip Jorgens," the inventor answered.

"What," Ferguson asked, "is in that box?"

Jorgens shook his head. "I don't know. I thought—but no matter."

"Where did you get it?"

"A package came by parcel post this afternoon," Jorgens answered. "I opened the package and this was in it."

He pointed to the box setting on the workbench.

Ferguson sat down. He slowly tapped a cigarette on a thumb nail, lit it,

looked around the stable. You can tell a lot about a man by looking at the place where he lives or where he works. Ferguson learned a lot about Jorgens just by looking at this stable.

It was one of the most completely equipped workshops the engineer had ever seen. A small lathe, enough tools of different kinds to start a store, the stable would have been the delight of any man who loved to tinker. One wall was lined with bookshelves. Ferguson ran his eye down the titles. Geology, physics, mathematics, biology, botany, astronomy, most of them standard texts. Only a man with a wide interest in the world he lived in would have collected these books. All of them had the appearance of being much read.

Jorgens saw the engineer looking at the books.

"Yale, class of '07," he said, smiling shyly.

Ferguson nodded. "I might have guessed something like that," he said. "What kind of work do you do, Mr. Jorgens?"

The shy smile widened. "I tinker and I read," he answered. "I own this property. It's about all I have left. The income from renting the rooms is adequate for my simple tastes."

"I see," Ferguson said softly.

Fate, he thought. Fate looks all over the world and she selects a silver-haired, gentle-faced old scientist and dumps something into his lap . . . He turned back to the box on the workbench. "About this—" he said.

"I was just getting ready to check the current output when you knocked," Jorgens said. "I had the impression that a large flow of current was being delivered. Shall I test it for you?"

Ferguson nodded, then watched, nodded approvingly as Jorgens fitted a heavy-duty resistance coil across the output cables, shunted a meter across

the resistance.

"Don't leave it on more than two or three seconds," the engineer suggested.

JORGENS pressed the START button. The lights dimmed, flicked out. The heavy coil of resistance glowed dull red, then white hot, then dripped away in drops of metal. The meter puffed into smoke, then was a charred, fused mass. Jorgens pressed the STOP button.

The lights flickered, came back on as automatic circuit breakers, freed of the sudden excess load, kicked current back into the main power lines.

"We mustn't try that again," Ferguson said hastily. "Every time you press that START button, hell pops all over Chicago. I agreed to the test only because I wanted to prove beyond the shadow of a doubt that the energy center that has been raising so much hell was actually in that box."

"Are you convinced?" Jorgens asked.

"I'll say I am!" the engineer answered. "I'm convinced there's hell in that box but I'm not convinced of something else."

"What's that?" Jorgens politely asked.

"That the box came through the mail!" the engineer answered. "If it came through the mail, then somebody somewhere made it and sent it to you. To the best of my belief, no one on earth is capable of building whatever it is that's in the box. If it *was* sent to you, then you know who sent it. You *have* to know more than you're telling. That box contains the most amazing invention on the face of the earth. I don't bar atomic energy when I say that. Secrets worth as much as the secret in that box aren't being sent casually through the mail. That thing is worth millions of dollars. I ask you, Mr. Jorgens, would you send a box

worth millions of dollars by parcel post?"

Jorgens flushed. "I'm sorry you don't believe me," he said stiffly. "There's the wrapping it came in. You can look for yourself."

He pointed toward a bundle of paper and cardboard lying on the floor in the corner.

Ferguson picked up the paper, found the name and address. Phillip Jorgens was the name of the person to whom the package had been sent. It had been postmarked in Chicago.

"I'm sorry," Ferguson said. "I'm—" Surprise and sudden shocked, incredulous disbelief crept into his voice. He looked at the postmark again to make certain. His voice was a whisper.

"What's wrong?" Jorgens asked.

"Do you know when this package was mailed?"

"I didn't notice the date."

"Unless the postmark is wrong, it was put in the mails in 2259!"

THE engineer's voice was a sibilant whisper in the suddenly silent room. His mind was going round and round as it grappled with the inexplicable fact that had been suddenly presented to it. Ferguson had an open mind. He was willing to admit that actually little or nothing was known about the world he lived in, that the great truths the human race thought it lived by were nothing more at bottom than a smattering of half knowledge. But he could not at a moment's notice assimilate the startling and incredible fact that this package containing a secret worth millions of dollars had been mailed in year 2259!

"This is 1946," he said firmly. "2259 is—"

"313 years in the future!" Jorgens softly spoke.

Ferguson fought to control his mind.

He was a first-class engineer with a salary of \$15,000.00 a year because his mind was a sharp, keen tool that he could use and control. The date on the postmark on this piece of wrapping paper sent his mind into frightened flight. He brought it back to heel.

"I've read stories of letters being delivered ten to twenty years after they were mailed," he said slowly. "The letters slip into a crack or down behind a box in the postoffice and are lost, so the letters are delayed. But this package was delivered over 300 years *before* it was mailed."

"Possibly it was just an error," Jorgens suggested. "The date on the post-office cancelling machine was wrong."

Ferguson's eyes came back to the box sitting on the workbench. He shook his head. "There's nothing like *that* on earth today. The date on the package and the generator in that box belong together. No, it isn't as simple as a wrong date on a cancelling machine. It all comes down to this one fact: somebody in the year 2259 sent *you* a box containing a very powerful and very remarkable generator."

There was a speculative look in the engineer's eyes as he continued. "Do you know any reason why *you* were selected to receive this package?"

"No," Jorgens faltered. "That is— Naturally not."

"Are you sure?"

"I—Yes. That's a strange question. Why do you insist on asking it?"

"Because," the engineer answered, "it has occurred to me that I don't know who *you* are, Mr. Jorgens. Oh, I know your name. You told me. You also told me that you were graduated from Yale in 1907 and I don't doubt that the college directory of graduates will reveal that a Phillip Jorgens finished school in 1907. But I don't know that *you* are that Phillip Jorgens. I don't

know anything about you except that you have converted a stable into a workshop where you spend your time tinkering and that you have received a most remarkable box that was mailed about the year 2259."

Jorgens was silent.

"Please don't misunderstand me," Ferguson continued. "I'm not threatening you and I'm not accusing you. But I keep remembering this package was addressed to you. I am also thinking about the man next door."

"The man next door?" The puzzled inventor repeated.

"We never know the identity of the man next door," the engineer explained. "He may seem to be a clerk, going daily to his office. He may look like a salesman, a banker, a retired businessman, but he may in reality be something else. Did it ever occur to you, Mr. Jorgens, *that strange creatures in human shape may come and go on the earth and that the man next door may be one of these visitors?*"

FERGUSON was talking fantasy and he knew it. Fantasy sounded strange on the lips of an engineer, who ought to be concerned only with facts, figures, and natural laws, but he also knew that every engineer worth his salt had a fantastic streak somewhere in his makeup. When he had walked into this stable, he had been an engineer seeking a tremendous leakage of electric current. He had found a silver-haired, gentle faced old inventor, a red box that contained some unknown energy source, and a piece of wrapping paper postmarked in 2259. If he accepted the red box and the postmark as being genuine, then what of the man found with them, what of Jorgens, who was he?

As the questions went through his mind, the wind that blew over miles of

glacial ice was again feeling its ways through Malcolm Ferguson's clothes. The man next door! Who was Phillip Jorgens?

Ferguson's keen eyes did not leave the inventor's face. He saw a trace of fear there, and a little chagrin, and doubt, but nothing else. The face remained gentle, the eyes softly luminous kind.

"And if I am—" Jorgens spoke, "—the man next door, what do you want of me?"

The smile on his face was enigmatical, calm, poised. The Sphinx, looking out over the sands of Egypt for more than forty centuries, smiled like this. Da Vinci got something of the same enigmatical quality into the face of the Mona Lisa.

"What do you want of me?"

Malcolm Ferguson was speechless, breathless. He felt like he was out of joint somewhere inside his mind.

"I—" he whispered. The question stunned him. What did he, Malcolm Ferguson, want with Phillip Jorgens? What did he want with the man next door?

If strange creatures disguised as human beings sometimes appeared on earth, if he caught one of them, what in the name of heaven would he do with it?

"I'm damned if I know," he whispered. "*I'm damned if I know!*"

"Think," Jorgens said. "If I am what you think I am, surely there must be something—"

"Well," Ferguson said slowly. "I guess really all I would want would be to talk. It seems to me that the man next door would know a lot of things that I want to know. He might know why there are stars in the sky and why there is life on earth and what I really am and what is to become of me. He might know those things."

IN THE shock of the moment, the engineer stumbled for words to ask the questions that are as old as the human race, and maybe older. The *why* of things. Why rivers run and winds blow and life lives. These questions were old when Babylon was a meeting place beside a river, when no one had yet thought of settling in Ur of the Chaldees, when Europe was a word not yet spoken, and America not known to the sons of men. "Why was I born, why am I living?" The song is new; the question was asked while men still lived in caves.

Phillip Jorgens smiled. "I'm sorry," he said, and there was real sympathy in his voice. "Perhaps the man next door could answer those questions, but I can't."

Malcolm Ferguson almost sobbed in relief. "Lord!" he whispered. "I mustn't let myself go like that if I am going to remain sane. I can't think about things like that, I've got to keep my mind under control. These fantasies— For a moment I actually thought you were the man next door. Ever since I was a kid I've thought about him, wondered about him, dreamed about him. That's really why I became an engineer, because I thought engineers might find out a little more about—"

He shook his head, clearing away the thinking in his mind. He fumbled for a cigarette. Somewhere in the stable a bell chimed, a sweetly ringing sound.

"I actually thought—" Ferguson was repeating. "For a minute, I actually thought— What's the matter, Jorgens?"

The inventor's face had gone dead white.

"The warning bell," he whispered. "They're—" He turned, started toward the door at the rear of the stable.

Footsteps sounded on the walk out-

side. The doorknob rattled as someone twisted it.

"Too late," Jorgens said simply.

He turned to face the door.

Two men entered. Clad in simple two-piece tunics of a color and a cut quite unknown in 1946, they stopped just inside the door.

"Well, Kathor," one said. "I see you couldn't resist trying out the generator we sent you."

"You sent me!" Phillip Jorgens gasped.

The newcomer who had spoken nodded. "You thought Megs sent it, didn't you? You thought Megs had it properly postmarked and then tele-materialized it inside a postal station here, knowing it would be delivered after it was found in the station just like any other package. Too bad, Kathor, but what you thought was an ordinary second-order energy converter that we use to power private ships is in reality a fifth-order converter. When you tested it, it broke down the time barrier you had erected for protection and enabled us to come straight to you."

THE face of Phillip Jorgens was a study in emotions. His gaze went around the stable, lingered lovingly on the shelves of books, rested sadly for a moment on the red box sitting on the workbench, probed regretfully past Ferguson.

"It was very well done," he said at last.

"Thank you," the newcomer spoke. "As you know, Kathor, we need you. A scientist of your ability is really indispensable. You can't hide from us, not in space or in time. Are you ready, Kathor?"

Phillip Jorgens sighed. "It was peaceful here, and I was very happy. Yes, I'm ready."

The leader of the two men looked at Ferguson.

"And this, I assume, is the one who has been assisting you?" His face darkened and one hand went inside the tunic.

"No!" Phillip Jorgens said sharply.

The newcomer hesitated. "What does the life of one of these creatures mean?" he questioned.

"It is your inability to understand what the life of an individual means that makes it difficult for me to return with you. Leave him alone."

"And what if I say otherwise? You are not giving orders."

"If you harm him, I stay here," Phillip Jorgens said. There was flat finality in his voice.

Before that finality, the newcomer surrendered. The half-drawn weapon slid back inside the tunic. "All right," he said. "Martens, get that converter. Kathor, precede me."

His silent companion lifted the red box from the bench. Phillip Jorgens walked out of the stable. The two men followed him.

Ferguson heard their footsteps die away on the sidewalk leading to the

street in front. He knew that much—the direction in which they went, leaving him alone in a stable that had been converted into a tinker's heaven, alone and alive, but terribly shaken.

"The man next door!" he whispered.

When he got to the front of the house, the street was vacant. The air of the night around him seemed to whisper back his words. "The man next door."

BECAUSE Ferguson was Ferguson, the course he subsequently took was natural and logical. He bought the house with the brownstone front and all the furnishings in it, including—specifically including—the contents of the stable at the rear. He spent most of his spare time in that stable, reading the books that Phillip Jorgens collected, studying the tools he used, working where he worked, perhaps dreaming the dreams that Phillip Jorgens dreamed.

His most treasured possession—there was not enough money on earth to buy it—a scrap of wrapping paper that the two men did not know he had—a scrap of paper from a package mailed in Chicago, in the year 2259.

JOHN KEELEY,

The Unsung Master of The Hydrogen Atom

By JOHN McCABE MOORE

The estimates of John Keeley as to the actual energy content of water were accurate enough to be quite comparable with those of contemporary science of the atomic bomb investigations

NEW YORK CITY in the year 1898 roared past the quiet death of a man who had already conquered the hydrogen atom. When people die alone, the police usually check up to be sure about the death. There were no signs of violence. The rooms were full of the gadgetry and clutter of a dreaming scientist. There were no messages of cryptic import, in fact

none at all, not even a loose-leaf book or a sheaf of notes.

The business friends, lawyers and bankers and the like, who had backed Keeley in his atomic power venture were puzzled. They were all supremely confident that Keeley was going to make them rich—or that he *could* do so.

John Keeley, however, was thoroughly dead,

and his responsibility to spare society what he considered the gift of a "Trojan Horse" was accomplished.

Before Einstein had begun to reform the cosmos to his own taste, John Keeley dreamed of the swinging forces of the water molecule. He dreamed and talked so long and hard that he got financial hocking. The lawyers and others who listened to his claims hung on the edges of their chairs when he drove .22 caliber bullets through fourteen inches of planking "with a little water." This was one of many amazing feats that Keeley did. *It was not the power of steam or any source of energy that has been utilized by man even to the present time.*

Keeley probably had no voluminous notes and calculations. If he had these were hidden effectively from prying eyes, or the indispensable "keys" were not set down, except and unless his notes were stolen and destroyed by the commercial vendors of carboniferous fuels who have ever since held the market.

Very likely his ideas were so common sense he needed no notes. Give the situation the benefit of the doubt and assume that there was nothing somber or off-color concerned in his death.

Not many years before Keeley's death the theory of ionization was new to recognized science. In the ceaseless motion of molecules of liquids and gases, and their more or less continuous ionization, Keeley saw great possibilities. Why not form these ions in large numbers and drive them together as such, in streams. And so the dream began. One of the paltry scraps of information that fell from his lips was the repeated phrase "atomic spin."

Keeley correctly envisioned the water molecule as consisting of an oxygen atom having a proton (hydrogen nucleus, the smallest true self-sufficient particle concerned in the composition of matter) revolving about an orbit within the sphere of the second outer electron, with another proton in an orbit inside the first electron sphere. (The outermost proton is thus much more easily separated from the O atom.)

So Keeley set about to obtain mass ionization and mobility of the ions formed. He discovered that by the application of centrifugal force to a metal sphere filled with water it was possible to so unify the "planes of spin" of the protons of hydrogen atoms concerned in the constitution of water that to free them from their molecules was relatively simple. In order to do this he weakened the electro-magnetic bonds between the outer protons and their molecules by maintaining a high positive electro-static potential in the sphere and

contents. He gave egress to protons freed by centrifugal force through two efferent amher rods which entered two pipes. These pipes were continuous from the sphere so that the positive static potential was maintained along them as well as on the sphere, and the protons remained within the e.s. lines of force travelling through the tubes A) to a pre-ionization air chamber and B) to a high-pressure chamber. Air under high pressure, with a high electron deficit was forced into B) from A) by opening a pressure tank valve. The pressure within the chamber B) having been raised above the critical pressure of steam, a switch was closed driving a current through a wire (uninsulated within the pressure chamber except where contacting the metal pressure chamber). The satisfaction of the electron-hunger of the highly ionized gases and the protons (admitted through another amher lock) simultaneously caused A) the collision of high-speed protons and hydrogen atoms B) a few collisions of oxygen nuclei and protons C) the conversion of a few protons into mesons (about one-eighth the mass of the proton) and their further conversion by the tremendous pressure of the hydrogen-oxygen explosion into quanta of heat, light, and ultra-violet.

Keeley was able to control the amount of pressure obtained simply by varying the percentage of the huffer gas (nitrogen) which he utilized. An excess of protons would tend to keep formation of mesons and true energy forms high.

Because of the proton-meson-quantum reaction's simplicity, Keeley was not perturbed by the production of large quantities of "radio-active waves." Ejection of alpha particles would be negligible (helium nuclei). Beta ray occurrence (high-speed electrons) would be negligible. Some positrons (compacted electrons) would of necessity be formed, but would be negligible in effects because of their small diameter. Gamma rays, however, were most frequent of occurrence, but the brief duration of explosion and the low incidence of nuclear fission (exclusive of the single protons) precluded the dangerous occurrence of such rays.

With a few simple tools, before the vaunted twentieth century, and without cyclotron speeds, John Keeley succeeded in the fission of hydrogen. History tells that his estimates were reasonably accurate, his scientific methods simple and concise (by inference) and his results non-parallel.

You who do not have so much measuring to do that you cannot think, how about it? What did Keeley's "notes" contain? How did he do it?

THE END



THE ARCHEAN SEA



IT IS said that the body fluids are approximately the same in their mineral content as the waters of the Pre-Cambrian Sea, and that life in the animal form must have stemmed in that era. Geology indicates that true animals did

not exist in the Archean Sea, unless they were structureless things . . . like giant cancers, you might say, hobbling on the waves—shapeless masses of mute, blind tissue, striving to order itself and survive, its only reactions being feeding and grow-

ing—feeding on everything and growing blindly.

As a cell becomes cancerous, there is a tremendous drop in its content of calcium and iron in proportion to nucleo-protein nitrogen. These two elements were probably in low concentration in the Archean Sea, as were certain other minerals now necessary to human life.

(For lack of cobalt hypo-chromic microcytic anemia develops. Manganese denial interferes with the manufacture and utilization of vitamins B and C. The importance of the trace elements in the human diet cannot be over-emphasized!)

Human cells which are offered high-fat, low-protein, vitamin- and mineral-depleted sustenance, gradually become perverted in their ways of life . . . unbalanced in pH, low in necessary minerals. Say one desperate cell goes back to the life-habits of the cells of the Ancient Archean. Calcium and iron are kicked out, some important trace ele-

ments are dispensed with, and with its sudden recovery of a simple way of life the cell begins to grow and feed, blind, heedless and asocial. By contact, by poisoning, by vibrations (it proselytes its neighbors, and the body slowly yields its high degree of organization to the dumb helpless urge of the cell to preserve its individual life.

Seventy-eight per cent of the inhabitants of the United States are not properly nourished. At least seventy-eight per cent!!! Most of the soil from which our food supply grows is not well, that is, it has not been maintained well enough to support properly healthy plants. Most of it hasn't been examined as to trace mineral content.

The banyan-tree of life has many tap-roots. It draws its substance and energies from diverse sources. Were it not so it would have failed utterly long since. Why not declare war upon famine, disease and death? *John McCabe Moore.*

★ MORE ABOUT THE SUN POISONS ★

DR. ROBERT MILLIKAN ran the cosmic ray up and down the world for years, making exacting measurements and painstaking calculations. He found that the limit of penetration was the earth's atmosphere plus two-hundred-eighty feet of water. This signifies that a sheet of lead twenty-five feet thick is necessary to stop the cosmic ray. From this it is easy to understand why man utilized the caves Mr. Shaver tells of.

A well-noted astronomer observed several years ago that the sun's activity appears to respond to the periodic activities of the nearer stars. He made no guesses as to the exact reason for this. It would be safe to say, however, that it is likely either the similarity of energy conditions in the locale of the sun and any neighbor under study, or the influence of the direct interplay of force fields between them. The point is that the degree of violence of the sun's activity varies both by cycles and in relation to its environment. It is thus indicated that the *degree* of radio-activity may itself be a variable—probably is. Is the "radium clock" of science, heretofore respected as the measuring rod of the geological ages et al, something upon which we may depend?

Perhaps the bombardment of earth by the sun has been quite virulent in times past. Perhaps it will be again. Mankind might be wise to prepare for this possibility.

There are indications that the gases of the atmosphere are undergoing a "radioactivity" of their own. It has been shown that the oxygen of the atmosphere is eight parts per million heavier than oxygen obtained from the hydrolysis of sea-water. The oxygen of sea-water, for the most part protected from "cosmic" radiation, has not been subjected in any degree to the seething activities of the Heavyside Layer, while atmospheric oxygen has. It is thus demonstrable that, contrary to current scientific opinion, elements are not inclined to be homogeneous mixtures of the same isotopes regardless of the source of material. This will not

likely pertain if the elements are procured from *beneath* the top layers of earth's crust. Oxygen isotopes tell us a) the formation of isotopes is progressive, b) it has been going on for a long time, c) it has not always pertained.

Man is now actually manufacturing Carbon 14 synthetically, on the pretext of using it in tracing reactions through living organisms. Since carbon is relatively free of its own natural isotope (Carbon 13), it seems best not to disseminate an unnatural form.

The carbon atom itself is almost pure romance. It is chemically the most versatile atom known. That is why it is the root and ground of life itself. Many organic compounds are so sensitive to energy conditions that a change of as little as one one-hundredth of a degree of temperature may shift a productive reaction into inefficiency. This fact is probably the most important single truth of physical science in its bearing on the future of chemical industry, both organic and inorganic. What happens to this sensitivity when the mass of the carbon nucleus is increased? The entire carbon spectrum is shifted toward the violet. Slightly? Yes, but in the mechanisms of life slightly can be as important as *tremendously*, for the organic processes are attuned to very specific "wave-lengths."

Instead of making bad matters worse by tampering with the structure of substance necessary to life, man should take the isotope filters (mass spectrograph adaptations) so assiduously used in the production of the atom bomb, for the purification of elements of their isotopes. It is naturally the easy road for us to deny the possible import of isotopes for man's future, but such a course appears extremely foolhardy.

Stop and think—the presence of one heavy hydrogen ion in one's cell glutathione system might prevent a reflex action that would normally save your life this afternoon or tomorrow morning. Are the isotopes worthy of inspection?

John McCabe Moore.

The TRUTH ABOUT TIBET

By VINCENT H. GADDIS

**This is the third of a series of competitive articles
by two authorities on Tibet and its "hidden mysteries."
If Tibet is good, or bad, we should determine which!**

BEYOND the centuries of recorded history, lost in remote antiquity, a great culture once existed in what is now Asia. There are records of its existence in Tibet, India and Mongolia. But the modern Tibetan is no more a part of this lost era than the modern inhabitant of Athens is of the golden age of Pericles. The Uighurs have vanished. The ancient Greeks have passed off Earth's stage. Walking in the shadow of the Parthenon does not make the Greek of 1946 a co-citizen with Plato.

With the passing of this prehistoric empire, man was thrown back into a primitive level of culture. Central Asia witnessed the surge of peoples, the myriad migrations of countless races. From this barbarism arose the dark magic so evident in all of man's early strivings toward understanding and controlling unseen forces. The dark magic became powerful all over Asia. It was climaxed in the great temple to Diana at Ephesus.

In Tibet there appeared an animistic belief known as Bon, a system of black magic and demonology. It ruled supreme until well within historic times. To the south, in India, Buddhism was born, and the philosophic systems of yoga were founded. After the death of Buddha a number of varied elements were introduced into his teachings. Conflicting schools of doctrine followed.

Buddhism was carried into Tibet in the seventh and eighth centuries, A. D., from India, but the new faith was not welcomed. Finally Padma-sambhava, the leader in this missionary enterprise, succeeded—but only by allowing the animistic belief of Bon to incorporate itself and its demonolatry into the already corrupt form of Buddhism that he taught (the Mahayana and Tantra schools). The Tantras, or mystic formulas, were a product of the sixth century, A. D., and "sprang up, partly as an accommodation of popular and often gross superstitions, to terms of Buddhist mythology" (*Ency. Amer.*).

This combination of Mahayana-Tantra Buddhism and primitive Bon then developed into the peculiar politico-religious system known as Lamaism. In the eleventh century, Atisha, a monk from India, attempted to reform the confusing system and create a more pure theology. This effort resulted in the formation of the various sectarian divisions of Lamaism which still exist. It is the

yellow-hat (Virtuous Method) sect, founded by Tsong-kha-Pa (1355-1417), that is led by the Grand (later Dalai) Lama.

Lamaism of today is universally defined as a luxuriant mythology and demonology that is derived from both Tibetan and Hindu sources, but largely Tibetan. "Sorcery and magic are in high repute, even among the members of the reformed yellow-hat sect . . . in which the propitiation of fiendish powers is a chief element" (*Ency. Amer.*).

Tibet today is a country of contradictions. Its two million inhabitants, one-fourth of them monks, are largely Mongolians and akin to the Burmese, but their language is similar to the Chinese. In the north they are nomadic; in the south they are settled in towns and villages. Their religion is divided into many sects, and the beliefs of the lamas differ greatly from those held by the masses.

The history of Tibet and the conditions now existing there, as given in the preceding paragraphs, are a matter of universal record. The interested reader will find these facts presented in the *Encyclopedias Americana* and *Britannica*, and the works of all scholars and travelers who have actually studied Tibetan writings and visited the country.

Much of my information has come direct. My father was able to visit Tibet in 1936 while stationed in Darjeeling, India. On my desk, as I write, is a Tibetan prayer-wheel, and I am sending one of the prayers it contains to Mr. Palmer with this article. In the museum nearby, a part of our library which contains many works on Tibet, are a number of rare objects from this strange country including a demon mask, temple cylinders, monastery bells and inscribed prayers—"Aum Mani Padme Hum!"

IT is true that there is good in Tibet, and that Tibetan adepts have developed great powers—abilities that can be used for both good and evil. Nevertheless, the good that dwells in Tibet today was originally introduced there from India. Why attribute to Tibet what rightfully belongs to India, the real home of the Noble Path to Salvation? Bon influence has constantly acted to twist and weaken Indian teachings.

The writer is not exaggerating this evil influence.

I, too, once thought that Tibet was the land of mystical milk and honey, but it was by reading the reliable works of sympathetic observers that I have reached my present conclusions. There is, for example, Alexandra David-Neel, the only European woman to have been honored with the rank of Lama; she is a practising Buddhist and spent fourteen years living in the country as an accepted Asiatic.

Her book *Magic and Mystery In Tibet* confirms my observations. She states that the Tibetans living in the Himalayas have only a thin coating of Lamaism and have remained practically Shamanists. Moreover, the Bon sorcerers work with the Lamas since the sorcerers are considered more powerful than the Lamas in dealing with demons.

Mme. David-Neel devotes page after page to telling of these black magical practices. The reader is invited to read the book for himself. Dr. Alexander Cannon, who is certainly sympathetic, has some startling stories of his own to tell in his book *The Invisible Influence*. Yes, there are Holy Men in Tibet, existing side by side with these sorcerers, but it is evil that we must fear and fight. My critics admit that evil exists in Tibet; it is my purpose to point out that it is stronger than they realize.

IT is difficult to reply to my critics as I agree with so much they say. Apparently they missed the purpose of my original article on this subject entirely. Against the background of this evil Bon influence in Tibet, I had noticed how certain factors presented by several writers seemed to confirm the conceptions of Richard Shaver. My article was not intended to offer a perfect all-around picture of Tibet; it was a specialized treatment of evil in Tibet, linking for consideration several reports with references that could be checked at any large public library, for students of the Shaver Mystery.

Millen Cooke's article opens with an objection to my sensational style, but it happens I was dealing with sensational data. Her statement that foreigners have made themselves unpopular in Tibet, hence creating it a Forbidden Country, will be astonishing news to William McGovern, who almost lost his life at the hands of a mob of monks for simply being there.

Next Millen Cooke finds fault with my use of the words "hooded" and "subterranean cells," and implies implications on my part which never existed. These terms were simple statements of fact. By subterranean cells, I mean the rooms cut from the living rock below mountain monasteries. I was certainly not slandering good men.

As for the sinister influence of Tibet, which has perverted the very Buddhist doctrines she admires (and I do, too), I think I have given sufficient evidence of its existence. The writers I have referred to will give more. Tibet's own occult philosophy, the Bon, is black; the yoga systems and Buddhism observed by Tibet's Holy Men

were imported from India. The "intimate relationship" is of relatively recent development and more limited than she apparently suspects.

Michael Pym's statement is a simple historical fact that will be found in any encyclopedia. Her book is not to be compared with Mayo's *Mother India*. Buddhism has lost out in its battle with Bon philosophy simply because it has been forced to compromise.

Millen Cooke again finds an inference not intended in my listing of Tibetan occult abilities. I did not state that they were evil. The truth is they can be used for either good or evil, as Dr. Cannon points out, and are! Mme. David-Neel gives in detail both the good and evil practices of these various abilities. Nevertheless, for some ten paragraphs, Millen Cooke brilliantly knocks to pieces a straw man she has erected herself. And I agree with every word she says.

Regarding my summing-up of data, Millen Cooke brings forth no evidence that what she calls my "two half-truths" are not fully true. The possibility I suggested and outlined remains. Tantras have been defined; some are good and some are very bad—not because they are pornographic, but in the doctrine expressed.

Since I do not pose as an authority or as having hidden knowledge from some secret or inspired source, Millen Cooke need have no worries about my other articles. I am a reporter, I collect my material from the publications of the world, digest, condense and compare it. Almost always I give the sources of my data, and my readers can check it for themselves. I cannot refrain from pointing out that Millen Cooke does not give us a single reference for her opinions.

Another critic refers to Shambala, and his use of this term reveals the source of his information. First, may I point out that there is no evidence that Agharti and Shambala are one and the same—who can say how many underground regions exist under Asia?

The teaching that Shambala is the hidden home of a Great White Brotherhood is being advocated by a certain occult school in this country. Perhaps it exists. I hope it does. But at this stage of our knowledge it must be accepted by faith; it will not be found in any world atlas, and you and I cannot confirm its concrete existence. The exact nature of one or both places remain mysteries since statements about them cannot be proved. Incidentally, this critic should get in touch with Millen Cooke about the matter of red robes.

P. D. Ouspensky, the Russian mystic-philosopher, in his book *A New Model of the Universe*, states: "Certain races have very significant traditions and legends built upon the idea of the inner circle. Such, for instance, are the Tibet-Mongolian legends of the 'Subterranean Kingdom' or the 'King of the World,' the mystery city of Agharti and so on, provided that these ideas actually exist in Mongolia and Tibet and are not the inventions of European travelers or occultists."

The writer doubts that these reports, as such, are inventions. N. Meade Layne, in his publication *The Round Robin* (San Diego, Calif.), quotes two passages from the book *Darkness Over Tibet*, by T. Illion, telling of a well or shaft, concealed by a wall, dropping deep into the earth. Stones weighing up to twenty pounds were thrown in, but no sound ever reached the ears of the author. He was told that only a few of the highest Initiates knew where it went to. Anyone who found out would have to die—"there are such secrets"—but no one would kill him. "He would die automatically the following night."

What truly lies at the bottom of this shaft—for good or evil—may be very important in mankind's future.

ASIA, sleeping the long sleep of ages, is now awakening. All over earth's greatest continent peoples are on the march. Our daily newspapers record the swift flow of events in Manchuria, India, Mongolia, Iraq and Iran. The Arab world is gathering. The Soviet Union extends its influence. Palestine is in turmoil. Oil for the pipelines of the Mediterranean—freedom for subject races—new homes for refugees from battered Europe!

In the great picture, now so confusing, black forces are not impotent. The Yezidees of the Orient are finding their leaders. All the dark cults, the secret societies, the long-hidden organizations are preparing for the impending struggles. For many years mysterious occurrences have taken place—wheeled objects appearing beneath Oriental waters, giant footprints on the earth, the Dburm-salla signal lights and the fall of spherical stones. What lies behind these baffling incidents? What secret connections exist between these events and the continent of Asia? Is it for good or evil?

From Mongolia rode Genghis Khan and his hordes. He conquered half the known world. Ris-

ing from a hunted outlaw on the Gobi plains, he moved an army of a quarter million men across fifty degrees of latitude. In one battle he killed 100,000 Turks. He conquered China to provide grazing land for his horses. A barbarian who had never seen a city and could not write his name, the mighty Khan drew up law codes for fifty peoples and outgeneraled the military leaders of three empires.

Genghis Khan is a mystery. What power was behind his incredible feats? The saga of Setzen says he was the *bogdo* of a race of gods; European chronicles call him a Satanic power let loose on Europe—a scourge from the desert destined to destroy a decadent civilization. Roger Bacon termed the Mongol soldiers of Antichrist, riding to reap the dreadful harvest. Historians are mystified. The latest general history of his times published in England admits that the Khan and his conjured empire is an inexplicable fact.

From out of the east have come the great conquerors—Alexander, Tamerlane, Genghis Khan, Attila. Prophecy after prophecy warns us to look to the east. Even now a famous adept in black magic, a Yezidee leader, related to the late King Feisal of Iraq, is actively unifying Arab forces with political ambitions from his palace on the Euphrates River in Syria.

Tremendous changes in the world are imminent. Awakening Asia will play a major role in the coming drama. For good and for evil many conflicting forces will enter the struggle. And the dark forces of the Orient are no joke; they have an influence greater than most Westerners realize.

Let us watch carefully the flow of impending developments, and let us hope that from a Shambala, a hidden *Shangri-La*, mighty white forces for the good of mankind will arise and lead us to a long-dreamed and long-predicted Millennium.

THE END

PRONUNCIATION IN ANCIENT TIMES

IN ANCIENT times the mouth was seldom closed in the act of speaking, and the words were formed mostly at the posterior of the palate and thorax. The letter A in English had its equivalent in the ancient languages, but nearly the same as the English Au, and not much unlike the caw of a crow. The Chinese Aug is almost the same as the Ong of the Algonquin. U long often had the sound Yu's, and sometimes of E only. U short is the same in all languages, and the same today as it was thousands of years ago. By using the root of the tongue instead of the tip, it is much easier to speak the Hebrew and Algonquin; and by allowing the sound to escape with the mouth nearly closed, it is easier to speak Indian and Chinese. For House, the Chinese word is Oke, and the equivalent in Hebrew is Obel (home), and L is so slightly sounded that when one hears an unlearned Hebrew say Ohel, it is impossible to dis-

tinguish the word from the Chinese Oke. The learned Hebrew uses Bayith instead of Obel.

By a residence among the illiterate Chinese, Hebrews and North American Indians (the Algonquin) more truth of the origin and use of primitive languages can be learned than in the wisest of the classical books. The letter is arbitrary and unable to give the phonetic, and after passing two or three languages, is too badly disfigured to be recognized. In learning a language we discover that our failures are in persisting in arbitrary pronunciation, which a native never does, though it seems so to himself.

The student of philology who desires to learn where the great languages of today came from, can learn more by a residence of four or five years with each and all of these four great peoples, and then not more with the learned than with the rural or unlearned.

STRANGE ECLIPSES

By PETE BOGG

HISTORY records some unusual eclipses of the sun which science cannot and does not explain.

33 A.D. The year of the Crucifixion. "Darkness over all the land from the sixth hour to the ninth hour." According to St. Luke, "the sun was darkened." Eusebius notes an eclipse in the 202nd Olympiad, but this could not have been the one indicated, as that occurred on the 24th of November, 29 A.D. The Crucifixion occurred on the Jewish Passover, which was the 14th of the month Nisan.

409 A.D. When Alaric appeared before Rome, there was so great a darkness that the stars were seen by day.

626 A.D. Half of the sun's disc continued obscured for eight months.

934 A.D. The Earth was without light for two months in Portugal, for the sun had lost its brightness. The heavens were then opened in fissures by strong flashes of bright lightning, when there was suddenly sunlight again.

1091 A.D. On the 21st of September the sun was darkened for three hours, and when the obscuration had ceased, the sun's disc still retained a peculiar color.

1206 A.D. On the last day of February there was complete darkness for six hours, turning day into night.

1241 A.D. Five months after the Mongolian battle at Liegnitz, the sun was darkened so that the stars could be seen in the heavens at three o'clock on Michaelmas Day. There is no eclipse recorded for that day.

1547 A.D. The 23rd, 24th and 25th of April, the days preceding and immediately succeeding the battle of Muhlbach, the sun appeared as though suffused with blood, while at the same time many stars were visible at high noon. The cause could not have originated in our atmosphere because the stars were visible at noon. Charles V complained that "the sun is always obscured when I am about to enter into battle with the enemy."

Less striking, but worthy of mention, are the following:

45 B.C. After the death of Julius Caesar the sun remained pale for a whole year and gave less than its usual warmth. Fruit did not ripen.

358 A.D. A darkening continued for two hours on the 22nd of August before the fearful earthquake of Nicomedia. No objects in contiguous or juxtaposition were discernable when examining the sun.

733 A.D. When the Arabs were driven back across the Pyrenees after the battle of Tours, the sun was so much darkened on the 19th of August as to excite universal terror.

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DISCUSSIONS



AMAZING STORIES will publish in each issue a selection of letters from readers. Everybody is welcome to contribute. Bouquets and brickbats will have an equal chance. Inter-reader correspondence and controversy will be encouraged through this department. Get in with the gang and have your say.

ABOUT PROPHECIES

Sirs:

Graham's comments in your February issue of AMAZING STORIES are so convincingly expressed that he either believes his thesis, or he has an unusual faculty of expression. My reaction is that he would be a d—d good jury lawyer.

Is he spoofing about "Oahspe"?

Tell him to read "Prophecies of Melchi-Zedek" by Brown Landone, if he is not already familiar with it.

Who wrote "Oahspe"?

I enjoy AMAZING STORIES even if I am a bit hard to sell on some things.

R. M. Redding,
Driskill Hotel,
Austin, Texas.

From personal contact with Mr. Graham, we'd say he believes his thesis—if that proves anything. As for spoofing about Oahspe, most certainly not. Why do you ask?

We know little about Brown Landone, nor have we read his book. But we do have a few opinions from what we do know. First, Landone is reputed to have had some sort of means of prolonging his life, and recently (we believe he's dead now) was reported to be already over 125 years old and looks 35". Because of this (if true) we are a bit piqued because he did not give his discovery to the rest of us who die at 70. He was also reported interested in a very valuable plant which was being introduced into this country and which would grow only in muck six feet deep. Again, reputedly, (we may be doing the man a vast injustice) he was buying, and persuading his friends to buy Florida land of this particular type. The object, future profit, of course, which is natural. Our only objection is that his motives were always claimed to be "for humanity only, and not for self." We don't know, but we are forced to decide by the record. As for prophecy, you will pardon us for saying that human beings are suckers for wanting to know about the "dark man in their future" and therefore prophecy is resorted to as a means of impressing them. Not that it isn't possible to prophesy, and quite accurately, but these "mystic" prophecies almost never come true, or are so vague they would fit anything that subsequently happens.

As for Oahspe, it was written by John Ballou

Newbrough in 1881 by a means known today as "automatic writing" (except that Newbrough used one of the first typewriters invented). He said 100,000 "spirits" wrote it; Shaver says it was written by "ray control" from the caves. Take your choice. It's immaterial. What counts is what's in the book. Historically, it is one of the most amazing miracles of the age.—Ed.

PROOF OF THE FOREGOING

Sirs:

Immediately after reading your February issue I sent for a copy of Oahspe and was startled to find therein the statement that such men as I would appear in this age. When you know that five years ago I wrote out a theory of the solar system which nearly parallels the one in Oahspe, though for vortex I used whirlpool, you can understand my amazement. My own theory agrees with Oahspe as to what electricity is and as to what a magnetic field is, though it took me nine years of patient research to arrive at that conclusion.

Millions with a sense that they are alien to this type of civilization and a belief that they have a job to do—do we know or think we know what our individual jobs are? Yes, in my own case and in the case of several others that I know. Amazing, is it not, that in every case we have each trained ourselves for our specific job. Not in orthodox schools, but by actual working at things which gave the most complete training, often dropping good paying jobs for the chance to begin at the bottom in something else.

In my own case I've spent a lifetime learning about every mechanical device man has built in the last 2,000 years, plus the theoretical basis underlying electrical and atomic physics. Why? Well, one day the opportunity to teach those subjects in a new and practical way will be mine, and I had to be ready. And to that several years experience in training youngsters in mechanical skills and you have the picture. Why not regular schools? Well, something said a positive no to that, for I would also acquire habit there which I must never let dominate my life, nor might I accept the opinion of any other being as truth until I had proved it.

Nine years ago someone calling himself the "Knower" would, when I'd permit, write through my hands on my typewriter what apparently were sermons to the people of the world telling them

how they were mistaken in their attitude toward life and all of it agreeing with Oahspe. Frequently I had the thought that I knew someone some way in Tibet and received information from there. When the war started, these messages stopped coming. However, imagine if you can my feelings when I read in this issue that there actually were people calling themselves Knowers in Tibet.

Shaver wrote me a letter asking that I disregard the voice and the appearances as they were the product of underground dero. Let me assure you that if I had ever disregarded those voices I'd be dead and forgotten long ago. They have protected my life too many times for me to accept them as dero. When advising against a course of action, it is because of danger to myself or to others. They stress: Do not kill.

Whenever a person, or what looks to be a person, appears here to me, they invariably appear in a circle of pure white light, not strong enough to hurt my eyes, but strong enough to blind most people. My own eyes are fire-tempered by long looking into forging fires and oxy-acetylene flames. I can, and frequently do, look directly at an arc welder in action when not more than two feet from the arc, often forgetting to pull the hood down when welding myself, which bothers me not at all.

I have sat here in my own home and often seemingly walked and talked with people in places far from here in space and time. Not alone on this world, but on others too, for often there are things and conditions there that could not be on this earth. Curiously the things I see never astonish me as they seem normal and to me well-known. Why? Because there are things there that I must know and could not know otherwise. Let who will explain it. I haven't any explanation other than that I have a job to do somewhere and some time.

B. T. Stevens, Sr.,
P. O. Box 331,
Antioch, Calif.

This letter is duplicated a thousand times in your editor's files. You readers can take our word for this in perfect confidence, but we ask you not to. If you will try to find out for yourself (ask and you shall receive, the Bible says), you will learn the truth first hand.

We published this letter for a good reason. We know that thousands more have had the same experience, and we believe they ought to get together. At least they should know that many others like themselves exist. Publication of this letter will persuade others to write your editor—which brings us to your editor's own "mission."

In 1927 (at the age of 17) your editor knew that the day would come when he would be the editor of AMAZING STORIES. He also knew that he had a job to do. He knew what it was. He knew, among other things, that he would have a daughter named Linda (although he only knew the synonym for that name and insisted he would

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have a daughter called "beautiful." Linda means "beautiful"). Your editor also had quit a good-paying job right in the middle of the depression, to the utter horror of his family, and with the result that he was kicked out into the street, figuratively, by being informed no subsistence would be forthcoming—which was perfectly just, and we didn't resent it. We also quit school because we disagreed with the science prof who tried to teach us Newton's second law of collision—and we knew it was wrong. It is still wrong.

Instead, we taught ourselves the job we are doing today. Far fetched? We'll say! But we know it was the thing to do. We had no visions, no voices, no Tibetan Knowers. We still do not. But we know that that "something" that H. G. Wells remarked about so dourly in his last book *IS* going on, and that there are two sides to it.

Our files prove it. Shaver proves it. YOU readers prove it.

Mr. Stevens, the war may have stopped your contact with the Knowers, but many others write us about their activities right now. We have, for instance, in our files, literally sheafs of papers simply outlining that knowledge that is being imparted to many. We confess that some of it is over our heads, but a lot of it agrees with the reason we left school—in other words, it points out the same errors we were convinced existed in teaching circles.

BUT, we want to warn you, and others, that not all who call themselves Knowers are out for good. Shaver's dero exist even in Tibet. It's a very good idea to accept nothing any Knower tells you unless you can prove it to your own satisfaction to be good.

Which will give you readers some idea of why we believe in the Shaver Mystery. It is still a vast mystery, but it's REAL, make no mistake about that!—Ed.

MANTONG

Sirs:

I, as have so many other scientifically inclined readers of science fiction, have been following the Shaver Mystery since its outset. This letter is written concerning your so-called "Mantong." I myself have done considerable research on language roots. In my paper, "An Investigation Into Common Language Roots" I traced over 27 languages and dialects through Latin and Greek back to Hebrew and finally ended at a blank wall at the ancient Sanskrit. Then I read your "Report From The Forgotten Past."

This was what I had searched for! Here, at last, was something I could use as a tool to dissect roots! Here was an absolutely logical reason for words, as such, being!

Ponder a moment. Consider the possibilities of a race advanced to the point where communication is "absolute." By "absolute" I mean complete, total, simply: mental telepathy! This great race has under its control a race or races lower on "growth" level (growth as used by Shaver). This

race must communicate by vocals. In order to found a language in which all the separate groups can study with ease, this race constructed a language on purely scientific principles. That language, which dovetails with virtually all languages spoken today, is Mantong!

I have seen how you have constructed a Mantong key in the English language. But, have you done any work on proper names? I have just "disected" my own name, to my own great amazement.

Why don't Mr. Shaver and Mr. Palmer publish a pamphlet containing the complete writings and contributions you have received on Lemuria and the ancients, and Mantong?

Leonard W. Felstiner,
58 Highland Ave.,
Haverhill, Massachusetts.

It will no doubt please you to know that we are working on, not a pamphlet, but a book, based entirely on Mantong, which we believe to be the single most important discovery in languages in this age. We are glad to have this confirmation from you of the value of Mantong, and that it really is the key to all language roots.

Your remarks on this super race are quite interesting, and your theory that the Mantong key was invented by that race to allow vocal communication with human races seems to us to be more than a theory, but a fact. Obviously mental telepathy is the language of Shaver's Titans.

Any information you've gathered in your work which might aid us in publishing this book about Mantong and how to use it, would be vastly appreciated.—Ed.

EDWARD JOHN'S CAVE

Sirs:

In your May issue you had a letter from Mr. Edward John, 475 Fell St., San Francisco 2, California. He states there is a mysterious cave, into which automobiles and U. S. Gov't trucks have disappeared.

Do you believe his story has any chance of being true? If it is, I intend taking an armed crew of veterans like myself, and do some investigating.

I would appreciate hearing from you in this matter, so that we won't be taken in on a foolish exploration.

James R. Martin,
1239 Penn St., N.E.,
Washington 2, D.C.

To be frank, we don't know whether to believe Mr. John or not. At the present writing, we haven't any proof. But if it can be gotten, we will certainly get it—because you aren't the only one who wants to investigate it. Mr. John has been visited by at least seven people that we know of, who have reported to us. One group of five soldiers is outfitting an expedition for May. What they will find will be interesting. A San Francisco reporter called on Mr. John, and it is his opinion that Mr. John is hedging in refusing to guide him to the spot. If Mr. John reads this, and is sim-

care, we would appreciate it very much if he'd give this reporter all the cooperation he can, either to prove or disprove it. We don't doubt unusual things happened to Mr. John, but whether it is Shaver's caves or not, remains to be seen.—Ed.

SUPER ABUNDANCE OF LIFE ENERGY

MR. GADDIS' highly thought-provoking articles of the May issue constituted a home run. The skeptics are confronted with something upon which they can bring no magnifying glass to bear. They may pick at the evidence—they cannot destroy it. They may laugh, to their hearts' content, but they cannot laugh away the eternal verities.

It might be said that in the waking state the teleological total of the body cells is engaged in a co-ordinated expression of its accumulated energies. In sleep, depending upon the degree of its depth, coordination falls off to a minimal point, and vital energies accumulate. Systemic repairs and chemical transformations go on both in the waking and sleeping states. Cells and groups of cells tend to expand in sleep. The spine lengthens measurably during the first fifteen minutes of sound sleep. The synapses (nerve-cell contacts to one another) relax. The synapses relax almost too far for efficiency if sleep is long-continued (in 1938 it was shown that rats allowed only six hours of sleep in twenty-four) were four times as clever at getting out of mazes as rats allowed nine hours sleep in 24). The vascular system and lymph system relax as well as all the muscles. Even the heart muscles quiet considerably. Thus the cells quiet down and store energies. From where?

Well-fed animals die sooner when sleepless, than do unfed animals. Over-eating in general cuts longevity, reduces disease resistance, raises blood pressure, ruins the selective taste (what we have left of it) and impedes nervous and cerebral efficiency. Advanced mystics eat lightly and slowly of "live foods," extracting energy as well as substance therefrom. They drink water slowly so as to enjoy it and thus derive its greatest good. Fletcherizing is as old as man. But as Mr. Gaddis has shown the great source is still not pointed out.

In Mr. Gaddis' article on fire-walking is convincing proof of the fact that human mentality can avail itself of what would seem practically unmeasurable energy. For a force-field which can turn back the energy (radiant energy) of fire is indeed powerful. The rate of combustion in the human body could not possibly produce a force-field of this magnitude. Consider also that the men who have mastered its use can extend it to include others, whether through their mentality or through an actual spatial extensibility does not matter.



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The basic substance of which energy is formed (Mr. Shaver calls it "energy ash") is everywhere, moving in all directions (though its concentration is reduced by passage through inert matter).

The heart of every living cell is the nucleoprotein "within which resides the mysterious power to alter its own structure, building on here and tearing away there, with an amazing disregard for what we recognize as energy." These compounds assume their most important role in the brain tissues, and the nerve structures.

The nucleoproteins are condensers of energy ash. By proper co-ordination of the nuclear activities of cells various pure vibrations can be produced in great quantities by certain individuals. The author knows of a certain Californian who many times shattered goblets with no agency but "mental vibrations." These were definitely super-sonics. The protection of the body from massive heat by powerful propulsive magnetics needs no pointing up. That levitation is real will probably be proved by applied science within twenty-five years. The three-hundred-ton stone poised above the ground without visible means of support (at Annam in Indo-China) is one of the little teasers of a physical science that is all too pat as things now stand.

Man is prevented from the use of these powers by his own way of thought and action, by his own blundering manner of living. He deliberately gears himself to a tremendous whirl of activity. He must call continuously upon the emergency equipment of the physique. The adrenals are forced to pour their poison into the blood stream every hour of every day. Hate, fear, lust and anger, the commonest human experiences, (set up through the adrenals) introduce abnormal electrical and magnetic conditions. The nucleoproteins are so busy preventing these conditions (which are electrically measurable) from taking complete control of the body and mind that their potentialities are never allowed to co-ordinate so as to work for the complete being. By infuriating a dog continuously for many hours it is possible to raise the concentration of adrenal poison and its by-products to a degree where sufficient poison may be recovered from the brain alone to kill eighty dogs. Let's stop kidding ourselves. The vast majority of men are not captains of their souls. Their thinking is largely pre-formed and implied in the tight little circle of their own negative emotions.

LONG ago the Greeks aimed at developing the "whole man." The physique, the mentality and the soul were considered to be of similar importance. They aimed to attain emotional balance, deeming the resultant quiescent state necessary to the realization of the king-ship of the mind. The Japanese scholar who committed 400,000 manuscripts to memory was a master of this quiescent state. The startling powers of highly advanced men (healers, fire-walkers et al.) are always accompanied by tremendous emotional con-

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SUPER ABUNDANCE

(Concluded from page 177)

which is too palpably fine to classify as "being." It is not functional as such until "created." But the one form is in constant equilibrium with the other form everywhere in the cosmos. Some modernists attempt to "insult" the God idea by using such terms as "elemental force" or "prime cause," but they are really speaking the unvarnished truth with a least common denominator. For aens the finest thinkers have intuitively and consciously recognized the perfect adherence to perfect principles that characterize the physical, mental and spiritual phases of the deity.

Those of us who find the God idea unrejectable agree that "God created man in his own likeness" or with like attributes and powers. That idea is worth time to make it part of one's self.

Physics refers to the optical phenomenon called "interference" (energy is reflected back in such a manner as to "cancel" itself) by the alternative term "destruction." In the relative sense that a form is destroyed this is a correct appellation. In the true sense there is no destruction, but only the rendition of God Unmanifest or the Uncreated. This phenomenon furnishes interesting vistas for the possibility of concentrating "energy ash." The process would seemingly be relatively simple.

If there is sufficient interest to warrant it, the author will gladly make drawings of his conception of "energy ash," and its creation or organization into the varieties of energy we know now (physical science does not yet fully accord certain types of energy their due because they are too near the unmanifest to be "tied down" by the gross methods of measurement now employed.)

Why have so few of the myriads of mankind utilized the vast powers latent in his being? Principally it is because man has always extricated himself to the complete exclusion of understanding himself. He has placed the emphasis on his interest in external things. Before conquering or understanding himself he has insisted upon conquering and enslaving his fellow and his environment. Carrell, in spite of the puppets now snapping at his ghostly heels, convincingly demonstrated over and over again that it is not "man the known" but "man the unknown." Pope said, "The proper study of mankind is man." Socrates counseled, "Know Thyself!" The thought processes of the introvert have been the foundation for all the mechanical, mental, physical and spiritual gain of the race since the dawn of history. Will it ever, can it ever, be else? The Sabbath was intended for man until priests came and set aside man for the Sabbath. Money was at first utilized by man. Now man is bought and sold and controlled by it. Industry began with hope of being able to raise man from the ashes of poverty. So far it has tried to keep him there. Strictly speaking are we mice or men? *John McCabe Moore*

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(See page 177)